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CONTENT WARNING

WARNING! WARNING!

This story contains animal death, death at birth, kit death, abuse, neglect, ableism, violence, drowning, manipulation, hatred and battle! Please do not read if any of this makes you uncomfortable!

Allegiances + Dedications

DEDICATED TOO: DawnmistWrites

Dawnmist has helped inspire me so much! Her writing is amazing and i remember first seeing her works as art and animations. Without her I wouldn't have been able to do this

THUNDERCLAN

LEADER

OwlStar

A black tom with deep blue eyes

DEPUTY

FinShadow

Muscular brown tom

MEDICINE CAT

BerryBush - A light-brown tabby cat with orange eyes, with a large, bush-like tail

MEDICINE CAT APPRENTICE

FatePaw

WARRIORS

ThistleOak - A golden spotted tom with white freckles and green eyes. Spiky fur

BriarDust - A black mackerel tabby with orange eyes

ThrushFur - A brown tabby with darker leopard markings, small white freckles across back and flank. Tan tail tip

SandFur - golden tabby tom with yellow eyes

YewClaw - Tan-furred tabby with speckles of lighter brown instead of stripes, orange eyes

TangleBush - Fluffy golden and tan tom

MouseTail - A brown tabby with a furless tail

GooseEye - A tricolor white, black and brown tom with dark brown eyes

BrightPelt - A pure white tabby with golden back fur and tail, spot markings

SwiftClaw - A brown tabby tom with black tiger-like stripes, green eyes

MilkFeather - Grey she-cat with streaks of white in her fur, blue eyes

HollyPelt- Black molly with blue eyes

WeepingGaze - Black tortoiseshell molly

SilentStalk - Black tabby tom

Apprentices

FallenPaw - Orange and white tabby tom with heterochromia, blue and green eyes

DewPaw - Short black tabby tom with blue eyes

Queens

EchoWish - Tan tabby with white paws and tail

Elders

PoolWish - Grey point molly with blue eyes

LavaBlaze - Fire-colored pelt, green eyes

SHADOWCLAN

LEADER

OceanStar - Russian blue with deep blue eyes

DEPUTY

IvyThorn

A scarred white molly with green eyes

MEDICINE CAT

ShadowPod - Scarred black tabby

WARRIORS

TaintedFur - Grey tom with speckles of brown, orange eyes

FoxFur - Fox-like furred with brown eyes

LostSoul - A tan tom with deep brown, striped legs, pure-white face and speckles. Orange eyes

BristleFlame - A grey tabby with orange flame-like markings

FlameWatcher - Grey point tabby with streaks of orange around his brown eyes

AceStrike - A reddish fox-like tom with orange eyes

DappledFur - Brown tortoiseshell with green eyes

DarkMoon - A white molly with a pitch-black half-moon marking on face

MoonLight - A black molly with a white half-moon marking on face

APPRENTICES

FicklePaw

BearPaw

ELDERS

ObsidianBlast - White tabby tom with black markings that looks like an explosion of obsidian

WINDCLAN

LEADER

CobaltStar - A brown, speckled molly, green eyes

DEPUTY

TigerStream - Dark brown tabby tom with yellow eyes

MEDICINE CAT

LeafFall - White tabby tom with brown and tan leaf-like markings

WARRIORS

BrokenFur

NightHeart

SunLeap

MoonFall

DovePelt

AntClaw

FireEcho

GreyBeam

SoulWhisper

ELDERS

BrackenPelt

RIVERCLAN

LEADER

DarkStar

Dark black tom with icy blue eyes

DEPUTY

SweetFlare

White molly with a limp

MEDICINE CAT

FlaneSpirit

Large tom with green eyes and black fur

WARRIORS

BrittleClaw

SeaFur

WhisperWind

HeatherHeart

LionFur

DuskWater

WrenLeap

DaisyCream

RavenShout

QUEENS

FreckleNose

SkyClan

LEADER

GullStar

DEPUTY

WrenSwoop

WARRIORS

RidgeSoar

AutummLeap

CedarStep

CypressStalk

JadeStone

NorthRain

OpalHeart

WillowFur

DaisyFall

QUEENS

FawnStep

APPRENTICES

JunePaw

ROUGES/LONERS

Flare

Fickle

Rowan

Prologue

The wind howled around camp, screaming like the prey under a warrior's claw. Rain poured down on the camp, soaking up in the green foliage underneath. Water poured down the sandy gorge, swallowing it slowly but steadily.

Warriors streamed out, eyes panicked, as the storm raged on. Tails streaking behind them, the warriors headed towards higher grounds. Older helped the younger, agile helped the slow. A frightened kit let out a wail, dashing around the paws of warriors. It slipped and quickly washed away, wail fading.

A molly dashed forward, screeching, as her kit was dragged away from life. Two others pulled her away from the water, and dragged the helplessly limp molly to safety. A low, mournful keening sound echoed from her. Her claws dug into the dirt as she thrashed, begging to save her only kit.

"MY KIT! My only kit! For the love of Starclan, let me go!" She screeched, a wild light glowing in her eyes. "I ALREADY LOST BLAZEPELT!!! DO NOT LET ME LOSE HER, TOO!!" but her cries were to no avail. Another warrior could not be lost.

StoneStar watched the scene, eyes mournful as he thought of the lost kit. Her name had been PuddleKit. She had been an eager kit, excited to save and serve her clan. Now, she'd only serve the stars.

Poor kit. She deserved so much more. StarClan, can you hear us? The leader whispered to the stars, eyes desperate. Why did they have to be so...cruel? Yet, the storm raged on, filling the tom's ears. StoneStar slouched down, hanging his head as defeat filled him to the core. His heart sunk in his chest as he heard more lost yowls, and he wanted to shut out the sounds. He couldn't do this...he was clan leader...and he was failing his clan. Shoulders hunched, he rose to his paws, staring at the ground.

Warriors streamed past him, barely rushing a glance at the defeated leader as they pelted to safety, letting out mournful yowls. *I have failed my clan. OwlHeart will get them to safety. They will follow his lead, better than my own. He has always...been a greater deputy...then I have...*

StoneStar had watched the young tom grow up, from kit to deputy. He had started as a shy kit, alone in the dark world as his own parents had been lost to a battle to twolegs. He remembered the mewling kit wailing for its mother and staring up at StoneStar with wide, hopeful eyes.

He had grown strong, and formidable. He would make a wonderful leader.

"StoneStar!!" The urgent voice of FinShadow jolted him out of his misery, and he looked up, head out of paws. Water streamed down the warrior's fur, and his eyes glittered with terror. The wind howled. "*StoneStar*!" He spat again, his fur rising twice his size in a state of loss. "It's... It's DewStream! She's giving birth!"

StoneStar groaned inwardly, rolling his eyes back with hopelessness. Right *now*? During a storm like this? It would shake the forest to its roots! "Now?" He echoed, his eyes wide and fur twitching. He shot to his paws, a renewed energy flowing in them as he thought of one of his clan giving birth.

"Come on," FinShadow grimaced. StoneStar nodded, his eyes wide as he started to pace. His tail swayed, and he quickly turned around, ready to dash back to camp. FinShadow did not wait for his leader to go- he dashed off toward camp.

StoneStar pelted after him, his legs stretching. Why did this have to happen NOW? Why would it happen a moon too early? Frustration edged his thoughts as water streamed down his fur. He saw the desperate gleam in FinShadow's eyes as he caught up to the warrior.

He was naturally worried about his mate. It was no wonder. The two had grown up together, kit to warrior, never leaving each other's side. When DewStream's mother had died in battle, he had promised to never leave her side.

He wasn't about to abandon her now.

The two lean warriors came to a halt once they noticed a great channel of water blocking the way. FinShadow spat his frustration. "Great! Now we'll never get to her!" His hiss ended in a wail. Hunching in despair, FinShadow closed his eyes, wafts of mourning melting from him.

StoneStar frowned. He wouldn't give up on his clanmate so easily. FinShadow was shivering, his eyes wide and emotionless. StoneStar scanned the clearing, and delight fluttered in him. A log! It was skinny. But, it would have to do. It was lodged between two stones, one on each side of the temporary river. Small bursts of water roughly hit the surface.

I just need to tell FinShadow. He thought grimly, eyeing the log. It would be dangerous, with the water. Would FinShadow be able to get out of his despair to safely cross it? He didn't think so. The warrior had his head in his paws, moaning quietly.

But I still need to try. He thought. He walked up to the warrior and reached a paw forward, shaking the tom.

"FinShadow," he whispered, his ears flat on his head. "FinShadow, we can cross on the log," he spoke softly, his voice soothing across the windy storm. FinShadow glanced up, eyes wide with hope. His eyes seemed to ask *really? We can cross?* StoneStar directed his head towards the log.

Yes, my friend. We can. His thoughts whispered. FinShadow shakily rose to his paws, fur plastered to his sides. Yet, he heaved with determination. *He looks like a Lion clan warrior.*

Ready to face anything.

FinShadow eyed the log, seeming to size his jump. He murmured something quietly and leapt on the log. StoneStar felt his heart catch in his throat as the warrior walked across, claws dug into the log. FinShadow stumbled, and StoneStar felt his heart lurch.

StarClan save him! Don't fall! He thought, eyes wide. What would

happen if they lost FinShadow? That would leave the clan medicine cat and StoneStar alone to carry DewStream to safety, safely.

It wouldn't be enough. But FinShadow steadied himself and leaped onto the surface on the other side. Relief-filled StoneStar. They'd be able to do this after all! FinShadow looked at StoneStar, which reminded StoneStar *he* had to cross too. *Mousebrain!*

StoneStar leaped onto the log, creeping carefully towards safety. The log was slippery, and StoneStar had to dig his claws in to hold himself upright. He walked forward, and determination filled him. He could do this! He quickened his pace.

Suddenly, FinShadow let out an alarmed yowl, his hackles rising and eyes wide. What could it possibly be about? The wind blocked out all sound. FinShadow's eyes trailed over to the right, and StoneStar slowly followed his gaze, dread pulling his fur. *Please don't let it be what I think it is...*

It was a wave! Before he could do anything about it, the water crashed into him, throwing him off the log. StoneStar hit the water and shock filled him. Water streamed in his eyes and nose, and he rapidly swam up, trying to keep his nose upright. FinShadow got smaller until he was just a dot in the distance.

He had to keep swimming! He thrust harder, coughing as water filled inside his mouth and nose. His fur felt heavy in the water, and he sunk down, his legs slowing.

No! StarClan save me! StoneStar pleaded as he sunk below. His muscles strained with weakness, and his lungs screamed for air. Pain pressed his chest, and StoneStar wanted nothing but air.

Great *StarClan,* it *hurt!* Suddenly, though, peace overcame him, and everything was silent. StoneStar knew he was dying. He had a good life. Perhaps it was destiny for it to end. He had watched clanmates be born, and clanmates die. He had experienced the thrill of training a young cat, and to grieve of losing those beloved to him. He would finally see them again.

Darkness evolved around him, but all StoneStar felt was peace.

Peace and hope.

WoeSpring pelted through the forest, eyes wide with dread. StoneStar had died. Now, he and DewStream's mate, FinShadow, were the only hope for DewStream's survival. *And...it doesn't sound like it'll send well...* WoeSpring thought, eyes dark. He may be a medicine cat, but even herbs might not be able to save her. How would FinShadow react? *My friendhas lost enough. He doesn't deserve to lose even more.* He reflected on the time FinShadow had lost his best friend, BerryTail, to the harsh reality of sickness. He had grieved for moons and had changed.

He would've been lost, if not for DewStream. She had helped him with his difficult times, like he did for her. She lit a path in the darkness of his own mind and intentions and changed him for the better. FinShadow needed her. If she died... FinShadow had always been bitter when hurt. *As if his own soul wilted away at the touch of loss...*

Suddenly, light flashed in his gaze of view and his body started to tremble harshly. WoeSpring opened his jaw in a soundless wail as pain coursed it's way through him, sickening to the heart. His hearing blurred and screeches seemed to echo around him, filled with the sound of agony and dread. It took WoeSpring a moment to notice it was *his own* screeching.

The light gave way to darkness as his eyes rolled back, and WoeSpring fell, spasms of pain flashing through him. He dug his claws into the dirt, and suddenly, a voice whispered to him. *Kin of his own will change the stars forever. The gentle fallen wing will bring destruction to the clan, while the fate of a true warrior will bring peace to the clans like never before.*

Pictures flashed in his head. A newborn kit being washed away, eyes wide. The limp body of DewStream was on the side, eyes lifeless, as two kits struggled to feed. WoeSpring noticed a shadow walk up, unaware of whom it could be. It glared down at one of the newborns, hatred in it's green gaze.

Suddenly the ground beneath WoeSpring's paws raced away, falling down into an endless black void. WoeSpring fell with it, a screech

in his throat. He landed in what looked like camp. Thank StarClan! Perhaps it had all been a dream... *Perhaps my vision and the flood weren't real!* But with a glance at the sky, with a sinking heart, he knew he was still in his vision. The sky was red.

A splatter of blood dripped on WoeSpring's nose, and he flinched. To his horror, more seeping blood poured into camp, filling the clearing with the dead bodies of his own clan. Blood started to soak his fur, pressing against his chest and muzzle. *StarClan save me!* He pleaded, blood filling his nostrils.

He let out a choking whimper as a corpse walked into camp, seeming lifeless with the way it treaded. It was unmistakable to be one of the newborn kits from before. He walked across camp, unbothered by the blood around him. Deep gashes scoured the toms pelt. *He should be dead!* The tom was clearly a fighter. But not a gleam of gloating or glee filled in his gaze. Instead, his gaze was broken, as if beyond repair.

Then the voice came back, followed by others as it rose to a wail around the clearing.

Kin of his own will change the stars forever. The gentle fallen wing will bring destruction to the clan, while the fate of a true warrior will bring peace to the clans like never before. It repeated. Over and over again. Suddenly, the vision cleared and he was back in the clearing, FinShadow was staring at him in horror, eyes wide. WoeSpring found himself repeating the words, his voice shrill.

"Kin of his own will change the stars forever. The gentle fallen wing will bring destruction to the clan, while the fate of a true warrior will bring peace to the clans like never before!" He screeched, before sinking to the ground. Blackness edged his view. *I'm dying. For the first time, a vision has killed me...my body is of no use, now.* Dread pressed his fur as his life faded away, and he had one last thought.

StarClan, save my clan from the coming destruction. No matter what it takes.

Chapter One

Trust. Trust was a concept FallenPaw never really *understood*. As the apprentice gazed around camp, he could feel the scorching glares of warriors rested on him. A few growls echoed around, untrustful at the sight of FallenPaw. FallenPaw stared at the grounds wishing a hole would open up and swallow him whole.

Why had they never trusted him was no clue. Surely there was a *prophecy* about him turning all *murdery* and *evil,* but surely they could see past the vision! FallenPaw's shoulders hunched. He would never be welcome.

Ever since he was a *kit* he had received dirty looks, sparks of mistrust and even more *anger*. His father tried to be nice towards FallenPaw, but he knew just as well that he didn't trust FallenPaw, either. *He pretends to love me, for the well of the clan. But I know it isn't true.* FinShadow often curled his lip while speaking, and FallenPaw was always aware of the dagger glare rested on his back.

He stared at his paws gloomily, moping. What could he do to prove himself? Nothing. Clans saw cats such as his brother, FatePaw, as great and a hero to the clan. *Why can't I be a hero, too? Why do the stars divide me from love? From trust?*

He looked up. He spotted his mentor, ThrushFur, across the clearing. She was looking right at him, her gaze impatient as she seemed to be waiting for something. Heat filled the tips of FallenPaw's ears. *Uh-oh. She must've called me when I was lost in my thoughts!* Cross with himself, FallenPaw quickly hobbled over. Her ear flicked in acknowledgement of his arrival, gaze disapproving. She shook her head with a sigh.

"FallenPaw, please *try* to at least not get lost in thought? It smells like rain, I'd rather not get caught in it," her gaze watchful of his expression. FallenPaw tasted the air-she was right. Dampness soured the air. Uneasiness glittered in her gaze. *No wonder she is so*

worried. She lost her kit, PuddleKit, in the storm. However, ThrushFur showed no sign of grieve. However she felt was hidden under her gaze. *She's a strong warrior. I'm glad to have her as my mentor.*

Suddenly remembering he *wasn't* meant to doze away, he shook his fur, embarrassement burning through his fur. Wanting to smack his fur, he kneaded his paws in the grass. ThrushFur said nothing, and glanced over. Her gaze rested on a pod of warriors. "SandFur! YewClaw! Would you like to join me and FallenPaw on a patrol?"

A sandy colored tom slowly walked up, gaze calm, while the other stumbled up, eagerness in her eyes. A small lichen tom followed, eyes quiet and wary. *DewPaw. He's SandFur's apprentice.* He walked with a limp, but caught up to the others. FallenPaw murmered greetings to the young apprentice, who nodded in return. *My best friend.*

DewPaw was mute, but a great apprentice neverless. He was probably the best in training-or at least, that's what the warriors said-- *considering* he and FallenPaw were the only apprentices who learned warrior training. His inability to speak did not change that. Not one little bit.

The patrol padded out of camp, FallenPaw and his best friend flanking the back. No one exchanged a word, and the patrol headed towards ShadowClan border. FallenPaw quickened his pace, bored by the simple walk towards the border. *Perhaps I could have a little...fun while doing this.* He spotted a flat, laid out stone and leapt on it, making sure to be silent.

He crouched down to leap to another when SandFur glared back coldly, and stared. FallenPaw froze, wondering what he could possibly be in trouble for. All he had done was leap to a stone! *It isn't fair! Why is he cross?* FallenPaw thought, stung. SandFur's gaze narrowed.

"This isn't a *game,* FallenPaw." A *game?* FallenPaw knew that!

"I-i know that! All I wanted to do was..." He trailed off, silenced by the glare of SandFur. *He doesn't want me arguing.*

"Silence! You will *not* disrespect me in arguing! I am a senior warrior, I deserve more respect! *Especially* from the likes of you," he spat. The words struck FallenPaw like claws. He stared down. ThrushFur cut in, her gaze uneasy.

"He didn't mean any harm, SandFur. I am sure he's very sorry," she finished softly, her gaze silently challenging. SandFur muttered under his breath.

"He should know by now that messing around should *not* be encouraged during a *border patrol.* He could attract *ShadowClan* warriors!" He spat back, fur rising. DewPaw just watched, his gaze angry but nervous. ThrushFur breathed in slowly, as if to stop herself from shredding the toms ears.

"Don't be such an idiot, SandFur. Warriors won't be *attracted* just because he leapt from a *stone,"* her usually soft voice carried an edge of defense with it. "So I suggest you *shut your mouth* before *you* attract a bunch of ruffians with your loud mouth." SandFur stared, speechless, before muttering furiously and walked ahead. Looking pleased with herself, ThrushFur followed.

Feeling grateful for his mentor, FallenPaw grinned, his sour mood lightening. She showed him! Unlike many others, ThrushFur had been supportive of FallenPaw, ever since his kithood. *She's like a mother to me. No wonder OwlStar choose her for my mentor. He wouldn't want to choose anyone who'd make me feel hurt.* FallenPaw thought appreciatively.

Soon enough, the patrol reached the border. FallenPaw dashed over to a tree, ready to contribute his part to marking the border. He was rubbing his head against a drooping tree branch when the ground beneath his paws started to sink down to the side. Heart skidding, FallenPaw gripped the branch harder as the ground gave way.

The roaring sound of a river made him grip harder. ThrushFur glanced over at her apprentice, and panic filled her gaze.

"FallenPaw!" She screeched. "Hold on!" FallenPaw looked below him, eyes growing wide as the water churned beside him. A part of

the branch cracked off and stumbled into the water, and was slammed into stone a moment later. Breathing heavily, FallenPaw dug his claws into the damp tree bark. *StarClan help me!*

He shut his eyes, legs dangling in thin air. His claws threatened to slip, slowly easing off. FallenPaw gasped and lurched himself up, trying to keep his paws on the bark. *Hurry! I don't want to fall in!* ThrushFur ran over, as well as DewPaw, and they started to tug the branch towards land. YewClaw glanced at SandFur.

"We need to help!" YewClaw's eyes were wide with terror and worry. But all SandFur did was *stare. What is he doing?* FallenPaw thought, eyes stretching wider. Why wasn't he *helping?* A tiny whimper escaped FallenPaw as his grip loosened. SandFur hesitated, before slowly asking,

"Should we...*really* save him?" Shock drained from FallenPaw. Dizziness filled his head, as horror coursed it's way through FallenPaw's body, right to his heart. *Perhaps he just doesn't want to risk his fur. It isn't because I'm FallenPaw.* He tried to tell himself. But he knew it wasn't true. *If I were any other warrior, SandFur would've helped.* He knew with a certainty.

SandFur had *never* trusted FallenPaw. Ever since he was a kit. He had always been cold towards him, even judging. *But I didn't think he'd let me die!* FallenPaw thought, dread worming through his fur. He was going to die. Misery filled FallenPaw. Would ThrushFur or YewClaw say something?

Shock filled YewClaw's eyes, and she backed away from SandFur, eyes dark.

"You aren't who I thought you were." No anger edged her tone. Only regret. It filled the air. YewClaw glanced at SandFur before walking beside ThrushFur to help. ThrushFur however, looked like she was about to snap. YewClaw rested her tail on ThrushFur's shoulder. "Wait for after we save FallenPaw." ThrushFur relaxed, turning her attention to FallenPaw.

"We'll get the branch over the land! When I say jump, *jump*!" She informed him, voice stern. But underneath the sternness was panic.

FallenPaw numbly nodded, but he could barely notice his surroundings. His mind was on the fact this his own *clanmate* would let him die. All because of some mousebrained vision!

He almost failed to notice the yowl, "Jump!" FallenPaw glanced at the ground beneath him, and let go. He crashed against the floor and skidded towards the river. He dug his claws into the grass, steading himself. Ease filled him. He remained on the floor, dazed. ThrushFur ran to him.

"FallenPaw, just rest. We will return to camp soon enough, don't worry." She reassured, before whipping around to glare at SandFur. He then seemed very focused on a pebble by his paws. ThurshFur grew stuff and she growled. "SandFur."

The sandy colored tom glanced up, gaze defiant. Defensiveness glittered in his wary gaze and ThrushFur curled her lip in disgust. FallenPaw watched. *He really feels the need to defend himself for letting me die!* Bitterness tainted his heart.

"I had reason to not help!" SandFur said timidly. ThrushFur glowered at him. SandFur returned the glare. "You know what StarClan said about him! He's a curse! He'd be better dead. He's already a destined traitor." FallenPaw righted himself to his paws.

"I'm not *destined* to be evil. I can make my own choices! I don't *care* about some *stupid vision!* I won't let it stop it!" He spat, eyes damp. SandFur scowled, gaze full of anger.

"That's exactly what a traitor would say!" He whipped back to ThrushFur. "I don't know why you defend him so much. But of course, you've always been a bit daft." YewClaw shoved forward, eyes alight with rage.

"Take that back! She isn't daft, and FallenPaw certainly isn't a traitor!" The usual softness and eagerness of her tone was gone in a heartbeat. DewPaw watched, eyes wide. He drew his paws over his ears, shaking. *He's not scared of the fight; he's scared that he almost lost me. This argument is only a reminder...*

"Yes. He. Is. StarClan said so! He will kill everyone, mark my

words. He is a monster!" ThrushFur stared coldly.

"Then perhaps we shouldn't depend on StarClan as much as we do." Shock filled SandFur's gaze and he took a pace back, gaze dark. His eyes narrowed and he whipped away. Silence filled the area. It pressed against his fur. FallenPaw broke the silence.

"Can...can we go back home now?" He croaked. ThrushFur nodded, and the patrol walked back to camp. DewPaw was staring at the ground, his eyes filled with guilt. *He feels bad for not being able to defend me.* FallenPaw realized. He walked over to is friend.

"Hey, it isn't your fault. Please don't feel bad for not being able to help," FallenPaw pressed, butting his shoulder with his own. "ThrushFur handled it fine!" DewPaw nodded but stared at the ground. His tail dragged. A light breeze hung in the air.

FallenPaw flinched as a raindrop hit his nose. Then another. Soon enough, it was raining. Pelts soaked, DewPaw and FallenPaw rushed ahead, guilt forgotten. *I was hoping not to get wet!* FallenPaw thought, irritated. The sky was dark. ThrushFur looked at the sky and her gaze grew dark, and she quickened her own pace. She flinched when thunder boomed.

YewClaw silently padded up to ThrushFur and rested her tail on her shoulder, whispering something to her. ThrushFur relaxed a bit and the two molly's went ahead. *They really do care for each other.* FallenPaw thought wistfully, wishing his clanmates treated him like that. He frowned. ThrushFur and YewClaw seemed very close, closer than clanmates. He tipped his head.

Was it love? He wasn't so sure, really. It confused him. The patrol arrived to camp and ThrushFur walked to OwlStar to report. YewClaw started to follow, but then glanced FallenPaw. She beckoned him over.

"Are you alright? That must've been a great scare," she murmured softly. FallenPaw just nodded. YewClaw went on, "I'm sorry SandFur did that. I never expected my brother's friend to do something like that." FallenPaw nodded again, but his heart lifted. Some cats *did* care.

"SandFur!" It was OwlStar. His tail twitched and rage settled in his usually calm gaze. Uneasiness filled SandFur's eyes and he padded forward. The camp fell silent. SandFur looked up at OwlStar, emotionless. OwlStar went on, "Is it true of what I heard? Did you refuse to save FallenPaw?"

Gasps filled the hollow. GooseEye eyed SandFur uncertainly and backed away as SandFur looked at him for support. A moment of fear reflected SandFur's gaze before it was replaced with cold determination.

"Yes, I did. But why should I care for what happens to FallenPaw. He's a traitor!" FallenPaw wanted to block all the sound out. He shrunk under his pelt as he felt accusing glares rest on him. Crouching down, he looked pleadingly at his father, FinShadow. But all FinShadow did was coldly stare back.

FallenPaw lifted his muzzle, eyes narrow with hurt. He wouldn't hide his anger, this time. His claws dug into the dirt. OwlStar stiffened and dashed down, eyes narrowed in fury. SandFur took a pace back.

"How *could* you?! He's a clanmate! A vision shouldn't change that!" He yowled. SandFur didn't respond. GooseEye walked up beside SandFur and looked at his leader.

"He's right, though. He's destined to be a murderer! He should've been killed when we had the chance!" Yowls of support greeted his words. Only a few remained silent.

OwlStar hissed again. "We can give him a life! Prophecies have been proven false before! More than once!" A few of the supporters of SandFur's claim seemed to back down. A few of them nodded in agreement. "I will *not* stand by and let you judge my warriors! This is over, I will hear no more of it!" He whipped around and walked into his den, tail down.

The clan fell silent, and warriors padded away. SandFur stood tensely for a moment before turning away aswell, muttering under his breath. They stirred around FallenPaw, a few looking at him with sympathy.

This is what it's like to be visioned to be evil. It's the worst feeling in the world.

Chapter Two

FatePaw had always been destined to the stars. When he was born, the deceased medicine cat had received a prophecy about him and his brother. *If you ask me, it all sounds very silly.* FatePaw thought, shaking his head.

Why follow a prophecy that turned the clan against a clanmate? FatePaw knew better to ask though. FinShadow would claw his fur off! Still, he wondered. Ever since his birth, warriors had treated FatePaw with respect. *Everyone.* They always made sure he'd been comfortable, often attempted to bring him *offerings* and there had even been a argument that medicine cats should have a chance to become leader!

They also expected him to kill his brother, some day. Uneasiness pricked his pelt, sparking his fur. *I don't want to kill my brother...* And yet, everyone expected him too. They treated him like he had done so already!

He shook his head again, heaving a sigh. The heavy scent of rain filled his scent glands, and he couldn't resist the urge to look outside. The sky was dark, and rain poured down at a steady beat against the floor. A bright light suddenly flashed, followed by the clash of thunder? FatePaw jumped, startled. He then shook his head, musing. He needed to get back to work!

The young tom was sorting herbs, arranging dock leave inside the top crevice. His nose wrinkled at the foul taste, and he quickly spat them into their holding area. *Yuck!* His muzzle curled in disdain, and he sorted the herbs some more. *At least I don't have to stand out in the rain.* He fur bristled as thunder struck again and he leapt. Fear plummed him and he quickly dashed to the corners of his den.

Guilt edged his whiskers. What kind of medicine cat *was* he? A coward? *Medicine cats aren't meant to be cowards. Not like me.* He

needed to get over his stupid fear if he wanted to help his clan. A snarl broken out from camp.

FatePaw dashed out to see what the commotion could be about. His heart sunk. It was SandFur. And he was glaring at FallenPaw with hatred in his eyes. SandFur had never trusted FallenPaw, FatePaw realized. He had always shone some scorn towards FallenPaw, even when he was a kit. It was like he thought FallenPaw was a murderer already!

FallenPaw seemed to shrink under the gaze of SandFur, tail drooping in the dirt. His eyes glittered with hurt, but shock to. His fur was ruffled, and his pupils darted around as if someone were going to leap at him and rip his throat out. Something must've happened at his patrol, FatePaw told himself. A tom only looked that frightened and angry *after* something eventful happened. And that something was most likely involved with *SandFur*.

FatePaw knew with a sudden jolt that he had worried about his medicine duties so much that he hadn't even noticed FallenPaw leave for the patrol. Shame filled his heart. They had always said goodbye to each other before patrols! *And I forgot...* ThrushFur was already standing protectily close to FallenPaw, her gaze asking for a challenge. She stood tall, muzzle in the air as her tail lashed. Her eyes seemed to taunt SandFur silently.

SandFur returned the look of concept, his tail brittle and still. He was clearly angry. FatePaws heart pounded so loud he was afraid the whole clan would hear It and turn over to look at him as though he'd sprouted wings. *I am scared. Again. And it isn't even* me *who is getting glared at by a warrior.* Discomfort at himself fringed his pelt, and FatePaw was sure it would burn.

"Yes, I did! But why should I *care* for what happens to *FallenPaw?* He's a *traitor*!" SandFur yowled loudly, as if answering a question. Rage burned FatePaws fur, aswell as dismay. What had SandFur *done?* He noticed FallenPaw look over to FinShadow, eyes wide with hope, but FinShadow had no attempt of standing up for his son. FallenPaw stared at the ground as if he wanted it to swallow him whole. But then looked back up, gaze angry.

OwlStar pelted down, swift as a rabbit. He was angry, *really* angry. FatePaw could feel the rage sizzling from his pelt.

"How *could* you? He's a clanmate! A vision shouldn't change that!" He yowled, voice rising above the wind. SandFur suddenly stepped back uneasily but relaxed as GooseEye stood beside him.

"He's *right* though! He's destined to be a traitor! We should've killed him when we had the chance!" A few cats turned accusing glares at FatePaw, disappointment in their eyes. It was as if they had expected him to kill FallenPaw *already!* What was he meant to do? What had they thought he could've done? *Poison* him? Claw his throat? *Drown* him? *He's my brother, for StarClans sake! I can't just kill him!* He avoided the judgeful glares of his clan, wanting to wail to the stars. *Why* me? *Why do they want me to kill my brother?* But the stars couldn't respond. Clouds covered them as it rained.

"We can give him a life! Prophecies have been proven false before! More than once!" OwlStar protested, voice commanding and loud. A few warriors stood back "I will not stand by and let you judge my warriors! This is over, I will hear no more of it!" He then whipped around, stalking into his den, leaving a trail of mud behind him. SandFur hissed in rage and turned away.

All FallenPaw did was stare, his gaze blank with shock and cold. He shivered, soaked. While the others had slunk away for shelter, he stood there, as if lost in thought. His claws dug into the dirt. Concern filled FatePaw and he dashed over to the herb store. Comfrey...marigold...thyme! He grabbed the thyme leaves and dashed out, setting them by FallenPaw. This caught FinShadows attention, and his ears pricked as he leaned forward to observe.

FallenPaw ate the herbs, and the shock from his eyes died down. He shook his fur out and smiled lightly at FatePaw, before turning away. Pride filled FatePaw. He had treated shock and had healed his clanmate from shock. Perhaps he could be a medicine cat! But his pride fizzled away as FinShadow walked over, gaze annoyed and bitter.

"FatePaw!" He growled, his voice stern. "Why didn't you *kill* him? You could've fed him deathberries, and the clan would be

safe!" Dismay filled FatePaw. FinShadow wanted his son *dead?* He was kin! FatePaw knew the two had never shared the bond that a father and son should have, but he didn't think FinShadow wanted his son dead!

A wail built up in FatePaw's throat, although he knew it must sound like whining to FinShadow. "He's my brother! I can't kill him!" FatePaw whimpered, voice shrill. FinShadow looked at FatePaw, disappointment in his eyes.

"What have you become? A coward! A coward who's too *scared* to kill his brother that will *ruin our clan."* He hissed the last words through gritted teeth.

"I'm not a coward! I just...how can you expect me to kill my *brother?"* A bit of irritation ran through his pelt.

"Because you're a medicine cat! You should be able to give up *everything* for them! It's the clan safety that matters. It's not about if you feel all *sad."* FinShadow spat. FatePaw felt the urge to cover his ears with his paws. Dismay rooted him to the ground, and he gazed at his father hopelessly, eyes wide and ears flat. Mud built up on his tail as it rained, soaking his pelt. There was silence. Silence of a voice, only wind breaking it. Rain flowed down his neck and back, cold and penetrating. But it wasn't as cold as his father's anger.

"You...don't care for *me,* don't you? You only care for the me that will *kill* FallenPaw, don't you?" FatePaw sniffled, eyes avoiding the gaze of FinShadow. His shoulders sagged. "You don't *care* for the part of me that's real. The real me, normal me...like a normal son?" His voice broke into a quiet sob, and small shivers shook his body. His sobs went on as he crouched to the ground, screwing his eyes shut.

FinShadow's hiss broke the silence. "Shut up! I *lost* my mate and my best friend in that storm! I've lost a lot, and all *you* care about is wither I love you or not." He sounded broken, but *angry*, too. FatePaw dug his paws into the muddy ground. FinShadow scoffed. "You won't even answer me! Your too scared to kill your brother, and you are too scared to talk to me. I don't know why the stars choose you."

"But do we... really need to listen to the stars?" FatePaw asked, the question in his mind coming out. He waited for a answer. Claws scored his cheek.

"*Never* say that *again!* I lost so much due to that prophecy, so it better come true!" And with that, he was gone. Pain sliced his cheek, but FatePaw didn't care. He padded to his den. Hunching miserably, he curled up in a tight ball. His tail drifted over his nose, and he closed his eyes. Sleep quickly found him.

FatePaw woke up in a starry clearing. He dug his claws into the ground, eyes wide. What *was* this place? Shaken by the sudden dream, he paced. Stars filled the sky, and the grass was a beautiful green. Trees were circled around him, stretching towards the sky and the stars.

His eyes grew wide. Was this StarClans hunting grounds? He suddenly had a image of StarClan warriors pelting towards him, eyes wide and mouth open with the endless wails of a prophecy. Dread surged his pelt. With the way his clan had expected of him, what if StarClan told him to kill his brother *now?* He couldn't! FallenPaw had done nothing wrong.

He swallowed, afraid that StarClan would know that he was shunning their all knowing prophecy. He stood there, unable to speak, and then realized that if StarClan were mad at him, they'd have told him by now. *You're a medicine cat apprentice for goodness sake! You shouldn't be scared of them!*

Then...are you really *a medicine cat?* The voice inside of whispered, outlining his own doubts. "Yes! Of course I am!" FatePaw said out loud, trying to convince himself. "I treated FallenPaw! I *am a medicine cat!"*

"What in the stars made you talk out loud?" A voice grumpily responded. FatePaw whipped around, startled by the voice. His pelt pricked nervously as he saw the Molly. She had a flat, broad muzzle, and deep amber eyes. A scar was across her nose. FatePaw glanced at the molly wearily.

"Who are you?" FatePaw nervously asked, heart thudding in his

chest when the warrior walked closer. Her amber gaze was unreadable now. Stars covered her pelt. She was a StarClan warrior! His heart leapt in his chest.

"My name is YellowFang. I am here to talk to you about FallenPaw." *YellowFang!* She was practically a legend in ThunderClan! She had blinded her son, BrokenTail, and had killed him in the great battle. YellowFang seemed to read his mind. Her eyes glittered sadly, and she grew stuff.

"Yes, I did kill him. I was the cause of his other death, too." Her voice carried trauma, and her eyes seemed haunted. *She'll never forgive herself for killing her own son. Even if it were the right thing to do.* Was she here to tell him to kill FallenPaw?

"I won't do it! I'll fight you if I have too!" He said defensively. YellowFang just shook her head, but her face remained grave.

"I'm not here to tell you that. I'm here to tell you how you can change his path. Be there for him, always." FatePaw stared at her, gaze wide. He knew she knew there was a chance the prophecy could come true. But unlike other cats, she believed it could change.

Pictures flooded his mind. FallenPaw hunting, training, becoming more respected. Falling in love with a tom, raising adopted kits. Grinning as his kits knocked him over, eyes happy. His kits growing up, him training his kit, a rather unusual pairing. Then FallenPaw on a rock, much bigger and more determined as he puffed out his chest, looking down at ThunderClan. He was *happy*.

But then the bad ones came. FallenPaw leaving, gaze angry. Cats glaring. Blood soaking the camp, FallenPaw walking through it, gaze broken but bitter. Cats lay dead, eyes glazed. Throats torn out. Stomach's bleeding. Then himself, leaping at FallenPaw. The vision ended. He looked at YellowFang, who looked back gravely.

"Any one of those could happen. You need to be there for him, always." She started to fade away, but her voice remained. "Be there for him, and help him. And perhaps, just perhaps, it'll save his destiny." Then her voice was gone, and FatePaw woke. Hope surged his pelt.

Perhaps I can change it. If a StarClan warrior believes me, then perhaps, real ones will too.

Chapter Three

The taste of herbs was still bitter. Letting out a disgusted spit, FallenPaw scrunched his nose, gagging. *Yuck! I never want to eat herbs again!* FallenPaw swallowed the herbs, shuddering as the bitterness grew stronger. FatePaw had given him herbs to ease his shock. Whatever it was, it certainly was not a fine meal for one so young. Memories of before shook FallenPaw. Then ground falling beneath him, his claws loosening as he tried to cling on. SandFur refusing to help, deciding that FallenPaw would be better off *dead* than alive, to protect the clan from mortal danger.

Shaking his head, started to clean himself, drawing his tongue across his orange and white tabby pelt. He felt eyes rest on him, and he stopped mid-stroke to see them across from him. FallenPaw rose to his paws, very much aware that a steady gaze followed him as he walked, eyes narrowed. It wasn't trust in that gaze, no. It wasn't even a trace of joy.

He shrunk back, his heart pounding as his hackles rose. Anger built up in him. Warriors had no right to *not trust him!* FallenPaw was loyal everyday! Could the clan possibly think he was a murderer? He hunted for them! He fought for them! He had almost *died* for them! The anger bubbled up to a steamy rage. The prick of anger was *obvious* in the gaze of his Clanmate, who was hidden by the shadows. Gathering up his courage, FallenPaw let out a hiss, his voice scathing.

"You don't trust me, eh?" He spat, "well...how about you come out and reveal who you are instead of hiding in the shadows like a coward!" His claws unsheathed. He could already picture raking his claws across the face of the arrogant warrior. *No. Don't think that. They are your clanmate, even if they don't trust you.* Yet, the anger did not bubble away. Instead, It grew larger. "Well? Come out!" He retorted. The cat did not move.

The cat was hidden underneath the ragged bush in the clearing, tail

swaying. FallenPaw's words only made the shadowy warrior restrain their figure more-they drew back with a hiss and the eyes vanished. He had hidden himself away from FallenPaw! *As if it's so bad to defend myself.* FallenPaw thought sourly. He tensed and strode forward, so that his muzzle and face would stick into the bush. Eyes flashed reproachfully and FallenPaw recognized the gaze of SandFur. FallenPaw returned the gaze, his breath caught in his throat.

"FallenPaw," SandFur hissed. "Leave me alone, traitor."

FallenPaw stared at him with narrowed eyes. "No," he growled back. What was his problem? Why couldn't he have a slow paced, normal apprentice life? Why must every moment of his life be tormented by un-trust and hatred? And who was SandFur to call him a traitor? It sounded so..dumb!

FallenPaw hadn't meant it when he wished to claw SandFurs face off. He would *never* hurt his clanMates! No matter how much they hurt him...no matter how much almost *every-cat* seemed to approach him like a sour herb. A keening, rough growl bubbled up in his throat.

"I am not a traitor! I have been nothing but loyal!" He nastily spat, his claws digging back into the dirt. SandFur flicked his tail in disbelief.

"Yeah, that's not true," the warrior said brusquely, rounding up on FallenPaw with a scoff present on his face. FallenPaw drew back, his eyes intransigent. Steamy anger blistered in FallenPaw, as-well as a tang of sadness. SandFur was so *quick* to assume. oh? A vision from the stars? Evil! Murderer! Already totally evil!!!

At least DewPaw understood him. DewPaw was an apprentice and had more sense! FallenPaw dug his claws into the dirt. SandFur reared back, his eyes growing dramatically wide. He waved his tail, pointing at FallenPaws claws. FallenPaw watched with a bored expression, staring right into SandFur's eyes. SandFur opened his mouth to yowl a "warning", but as he did so, ThrushFur walked past. She added her stern stare to FallenPaw's, and SandFur faltered. Pride filled FallenPaw as SandFur walked off, stumbling as he did

so.

ThrushFur exchanged a spunky glance with FallenPaw, grinning widely.

"we showed that furball!" ThrushFur laughed, crouching down while making a very convincing scary face. FallenPaw let out a doubtful snort at her expression, but his eyes glittered with his merriment. ThrushFur suddenly got out of her scary pose, her gaze traveling across the clearing. FallenPaw glanced behind his shoulder and his tail curled up in bafflement. It was only YewClaw... Why was ThrushFur suddenly so scared? Did she happen to be enemies with YewClaw? Had the protection before only been to hide this rivalry?

Perhaps YewClaw had been in love with ThrushFur's past mate and ThrushFur was bitter about it, but also scared? Perhaps more than dislike was going between them. YewClaw padded over to ThrushFur, her eyes gleaming with an emotion FallenPaw couldn't make sense of. YewClaw mewed a greeting and ThrushFur quickly said one back.

"oh! Hi YewClaw!" Her paws nervously shuffled in the dirt, scumming dust around. FallenPaw backed away, feeling a bit awkward at this situation. Instead he headed over to the apprentice den, and sat down by his friend, DewPaw. DewPaw waved his tail in greeting and FallenPaw smiled back.

"I think YewClaw and ThrushFur dislike each other," FallenPaw explained as he sat down, watching ThrushFur manage to fall over and then quickly get up herself when YewClaw offered help. DewPaw eyed the two cats and looked at FallenPaw while shaking his head. FallenPaw frowned in confusion. DewPaw smacked his head with his tail and pointed towards ThistleOak and BriarDust. The two mate's were grinning as they joked with each other, shoulders shaking with laughter.

FallenPaw suddenly grasped the idea of what DewPaw was trying to say.

"You think they're in love?" He snorted, shaking his head. "YewClaw

didn't seem to like ThrushFur a few moons ago!" He added quickly, while DewPaw rested a "are you really that oblivious" look onto him. DewPaw shook his head, and rose to his paws, pointing his tail to the entrance.

FallenPaw frowned, and followed his friend, who was heading out of camp. DewPaw's soft black fur rippled slightly, his wide, orange eyes scanning the area. He lifted his tail to stop FallenPaw, and FallenPaw jolted to a stop. DewPaw breathed in, looking around warily.

FallenPaw followed his gaze, confused. Why was DewPaw being so wary? It looked as if he were making sure no cat followed them...DewPaw accessed a large bush, before nodding to himself and walking ahead again. FallenPaw followed, not saying a word. He scrunched himself up as DewPaw slid through a narrow opening of brambles. Thorns gripped his pelt, and he forced himself ahead. Freeing himself off the thorns, he quickened his pace.

Where was DewPaw taking him? DewPaw looked around again, before sitting down. He looked very serious. FallenPaw sat down next to him, and looked around the environment, green eyes wide and wondrous. It was magnificent!

Willow trees surrounded the area, petals a beautiful pink and white. The trees were large, and unbroken. Dew dripped off of them, and the water melted into streams. The small, glittering streams, dipped down into a pool, which was surrounded by bushes. The pool was calm and had a purple tint to it. Long grass blew in the gentle breeze, and pollen from white flowers floated in the air.

FallenPaws nose itched, and he felt a sneeze build up in the back of his throat. He let out a sneeze, his eyes closing, snapping him out of his sitting orientation. A wide grin crossed DewPaw's face. Hilarity pirouetted in his eyes, dancing around his gaze. FallenPaw pushed his lip forward in mock annoyance, rolling his eyes. This just caused DewPaw to silently laugh, tears edging his eyes. FallenPaw friskily shoved his friends shoulder, rolling his eyes again.

DewPaw managed to calm himself down-after silently laughing for

a few long moments-and the staid look in his eyes returned. FallenPaw tripped his head, his wide green eyes growing in confusion, his pupils growing wider. DewPaw made sure that FallenPaw was paying attention, and then made his face look very angry. DewPaws tail twitched and he seemed to be trying to make himself seem very mad.

FallenPaw frowned, more bewildered than ever. What was DewPaw trying to do? Scare FallenPaw away? Look very angry to make FallenPaw think he was mad? DewPawn shook his head and pointed his tail towards FallenPaw. FallenPaw flinched, realizing that DewPaw was referring to *him.* Did he really seem that....angry?

"Are you...referring to how angry I get when some cat distrusts me?" FallenPaw asked, an edge to his tone. He felt his hackles rise, and a bit of annoyance bubbled up in him. "That's fair! How is it not? Some cats literally say that I will be a murderer-

DewPaw cut him off, putting his tail over FallenPaws mouth. FallenPaw quickly stopped his words, although he glared angrily at DewPaw. DewPaw slowly shook his head, and FallenPaw hid his angry look, replacing it with a neutral look. DewPaw nodded slowly, and then he slowly backed away. FallenPaw slowly kept his cool, slowly breathing in.

DewPaw nodded, taking a step back. His eyes gleamed warmly and he grabbed a shell. He shoved into the ground, making one of the small streams blend into one of the others. FallenPaw watched, interested. An idea popped in his head.

"You're trying to control my...anger, aren't you?" FallenPaw asked, taking a step towards DewPaw. DewPaw nodded, placing his paw in the stream.He beckoned FallenPaw to come over to him, and FallenPaw nodded. FallenPaw walked up to him, his anger slowly dissolving. DewPaw grabbed his paw as FallenPaw neared, and put it near the stream. FallenPaw tried to pull back, not wanting to get wet, but instead he felt a calmness. The water was a perfect coolness, slowly flowing over his paw. Smooth pebbles edged the bottom of this small stream, and his claws perfectly fit. He slowly sheathed his claws, and he loosened. He had not even realized his claws had been unsheathed.

FallenPaw slowly closed his eyes, letting DewPaw guide his paw over the pebbles. He knew he still would not always be able to control his anger...but...it was a start. He did not say a word as DewPaws paw left his, and as FallenPaw drew his own paw out of the water, now calm. FallenPaw glanced at the shell that was steering the two streams together, and then at the other untouched streams.

"What are the shells for? Is it meant to represent when I control my anger?" FallenPaw asked, his large ears tipping to the side. DewPaw calmly nodded, his orange eyes calming. FallenPaw smiled warmly. "Will we add another shell when I improve and don't snap at some cat?"

DewPaw nodded again.

"what happens when I fail to control my anger?" FallenPaw asked. DewPaw grabbed a shell, and quickly put it on the ground. He then took it out, setting it in a pile. "so...when I do not control my anger, one will be removed?" He already feared the moment he would need to take a shell out. DewPaw nodded softly, smiling as he ran his tail across FallenPaw's shoulder. FallenPaw shivered, his ears heating up a bit. FallenPaw nodded.

"Thank you, DewPaw." FallenPaw whispered, understanding that his friend wanted to help him. DewPaw twinkled back, looking up at FallenPaw earnestly. He reached his legs forward until their noses touched. FallenPaw smiled sheepishly, as DewPaw struggled to stay to FallenPaws height. The two friends stayed like that for a moment, before DewPaw swung his paw forward into the stream, splashing FallenPaw on his cheek. FallenPaw raised his eyebrows in fake spite, right eye growing wide. He smirked, and splashed at DewPaw back, nudging him over. DewPaw let out a laugh and leapt at FallenPaw, trying to knock him over. FallenPaw backed away a bit, letting DewPaw knock him over.

They both tumbled down the hill, nearing the pond. FallenPaw pinned DewPaw down, grinning.

"Surrender!" DewPaw shook his head, smugly smiling. DewPaw shot his legs forward and sent FallenPaw flying, and now it was DewPaw

who was pinning FallenPaw down. "Okay! You win, DewPaw!" He laughed, as DewPaw shoved him into the dirt.

DewPaw purred contently, and sat up, wrapping his tail around his paws.FallenPaw looked up at him before flipping over and getting to his paws. He winced as the rain returned, starting as a sprinkle. DewPaw shot to his paws, looking grumpy.

"Aw, DewPaw, lighten up! Come on, let's race to the log!" FallenPaw shot to his paws as DewPaw had, and crouched down. DewPaw agreed with a nod, and grinned. FallenPaw breathed in, and started to run. His paws strode over the surface, and he closed his eyes, breathing in the scent of the woods.. The smell of damp leaves filled his scent glands, and FallenPaw let the scents overtake him. He ran gracefully, while DewPaw ran as fast as his little paws could take him. FallenPaw looked back gleefully, before his paws caught a root. He fell forward, falling in the mud.

DewPaw ran ahead, and climbed up the log. He smiled. FallenPaw shook out his fur, and DewPaw quickly dashed over to him. He held his paw forward, and FallenPaw grabbed it. DewPaw pulled him up, and they walked the rest of the way.

For once, instead of angry, confused or wary, FallenPaw felt *happy*. *P*erhaps he did need to improve his anger, he realized. But he knew, no matter what, that DewPaw would be there to help him.

Chapter Four

FatePaw was washing himself, crouching under a fern as rain pelted the camp. Hunching his shoulders miserably, he tried to dry himself, his long, fluffy fur preserving the wetness. He closed his eyes in annoyance when his fluffy fur shot forward, sending droplets of water onto his face. A thin line of water dripped down a leaf, splashing on FatePaw's nose. He sneezed.

The bush at the entrance rustled. FatePaw leaned close to the entrance, heart pounding. His stomach anxiously whirred. Was some cat about to intrude? What if ShadowClan was intruding? Or RiverClan? *I can't fight!* He closed his eyes, already picturing screeches of defeat...

Suddenly, pain filled his head, and he self-consciously sank into the dirt, his eyes opening wide. A vision erupted in FatePaw's head. Pictures flashed in his mind.

It was storming, rain pouring down. Rain pelted down FatePaw's fur, soaking him to the bone. Puddles edged his paws, and the mud smelled damp. Wind roared in his ears as the sky grew darker and darker.

He was in a clearing,a stream dipping down into a pool. The streams, once beautiful, were brown and mucky, dirt and grass quickly flowing down. They overflowed, and shells, yes, shells, floated away, before spinning and sinking. Willow trees on the edge buffeted back and forth in the violent wind, white petals being blown away.

The white petals surrounded FatePaw and circled him, showing nothing but a mix of white and pink. FatePaw backed away, his ears roaring. His eyes bulged out in horror, and he let out a wail as the petals tightly pressed themselves against him. His tail pinned to his side, and he stared ahead in fearfulness, as the petals blew away.

The scene in front of him was horrifying. Blood soaked the ground and

the grass, steadily dripping down ferns. The blood slowly dripped into the pool, turning it a deep scarlet red. The willow trees were a deep red, and a sticky blob of blood struck his face. Vile rose up in FatePaw, and he swallowed.

FatePaw traced his eyes to the source of the blood, letting out a whimper. A boulder lay in the grass. The blood seemed to flow from under it, slowly but surely. It had blocked the streams at the end, which was turning the lake red.

"How...could you?" A voice hissed angrily, sounding shaken. FatePaw couldn't see who said it, but it was low, and definitely male.

FallenPaw-now older- stalked out, his eyes betraying no emotion. Only hollowness filled them. His steps seemed forced and heavy, and his tail dragged on the grass. Blood clogged his tail, making his usually fluffy tail, ragged and heavy. His chest heaved, and his breath seemed hitched.

FatePaw then saw himself-a older version of himself-walking out, hackles raising. His tail lashed and he bared his teeth, a growl echoing from his throat. His face was full of anger and loss, as-well as horror.

The two older brothers stared at each other, not a word between them. The wind roared, and FallenPaw pinned his ears against his head- FatePaw realized one of them was torn-although it looked healed, now. His breath caught in his throat as he saw blood soaking FallenPaw's paws.

Suddenly, FallenPaw leapt at FatePaw with a snarl of rage, his eyes blazing with hatred and abhorrence, his claws unsheathed. The rain poured, and FatePaw could see the bones poking through his older self's pelt, while FallenPaw seemed to be perfectly fed. FatePaw watched himself let out a nasty hiss, leaping away. FallenPaw let out a hurl of loathing. Lightning struck the sky as FallenPaw leapt.

FatePaw crouched to the ground when thunder boomed after, eyes wide with horror. He kept watching himself and FallenPaw, frenzied. He felt like he was slowly being forced to the ground, by gravity and nothing else. His stomach churned in clear dread, agitation sparking in his brilliant blue gaze.

Suddenly, everything around him shifted, whirling around. FatePaw let out an alarmed cry as he felt himself sink into the ground. Older FatePaw and FallenPaw whisked out of sight as FatePaw sank. FatePaw kicked his legs, and to his horror, only air breezed them. Then, he fell. He closed his eyes, ready for impact. The wind roared in his ears, making them hurt... pressure forced his fur down...

And then he landed perfectly safe, in a sunny field. He forced his eyes open, peeping one open then the other. His fur relaxed and he let out a puff of relief. He was okay, not on the ground, twisted and broken. Dead. But...what had that vision...meant?

FatePaw knew his whole life about how the clan had mistreated FallenPaw. How they tried to exclude him from patrols or argue with OwlStar when he insisted FallenPaw attend a gathering. A few had even howled *at the thought of FallenPaw getting ThrushFur, a grieving mother, as a mentor.*

"All he will do is hurt her more!" GooseEye had yowled, looking revulsed. Many clanmates had yowled in support.

Including FinShadow.

FatePaw had the knowledge that FinShadow tried to act all nice around FallenPaw, but every cat saw right through it. He remembered the angry, broken look, FallenPaw had exchanged with his father when he had yowled support to GooseEye's unjustified claim. He had torn up his moss as soon as he had got his new nest, only calming down when DewPaw had stopped him.

Would all of that really hurt FallenPaw so much that he would...kill the clan? That he would fill the clearing with blood, and fight FatePaw, too? Would...FatePaw have to kill him, like the prophecy said?

Suddenly, the stars seemed to move. FatePaw frowned, squinting his eyes to get a better look. Great starclan! They were moving! As his jaw gaped, eyes ballooned, the stars swirled closer. They stopped about three fox-lengths away from FatePaw. They outlined the shapes of two cats before fading into them.

"YellowFang! And, er..." He trailed off, puzzled. Who was this other cat?

She had soft, white fur, which was short. Her body was shaped thinner and taller, and her eyes were a deep lush green. She was more faded than YellowFang, and looked much younger, but her eyes held a look of respect. Even YellowFang seemed to honor her, no matter how much she might dislike it.

The odd cat dipped her head, her eyes a bit sorrowful.

"You would've known me as MothFlight." She whispered, pools of wisdom and sadness stretching deeply into her eyes. "I was the clans first medicine cat, healer of WindClan. But it has been so long since the dawn of the clans...I am not surprised many cats remember me."

FatePaw let his eyes go wide, wider than the pool in the clearing. He stared, dumbfounded. MothFlight let out a quiet purr of amusement, while YellowFang, on the other hand, scowled.

"We do not have time for backstories and joke." Her tone sounded serious and commending, and the same look filled MothFlight's gaze as well. FatePaw dipped his head, focusing his attention on the cats presented to him. Whenever something turned serious, FatePaw was sure to pay attention. "FatePaw...that vision was a warning..."

No! StarClan no! *FatePaw pleaded quietly to himself, closing his eyes. His shoulders sagged as realization hit him. FallenPaw would be a murderer... and he would succeed, too.* And...I will have to kill him...my own brother...

"But you can still change your destiny, and his." MothFlight spoke urgently, something else glittering in her gaze, too. "If you follow the right path, all of this can be prevented," Her tone darkened. "But be warned...not everything is not how it seems it will be..." The white molly spoke softly, into FatePaw's ears.

"What do you mean by that?" FatePaw asked quickly. He had to know! What did the molly mean? Not everything seems how it would be... His mind raced as he thought of many possibilities. Perhaps FallenPaw would have a comrade to assist him? Or, perhaps, FallenPaw would be out of his own mind when he murdered...

"goodbye FatePaw, remember...you can change it..." MothFlight

whispered, her voice merging with YellowFang's. Their voices rose, shrill. They echoed around the clearing, booming into FatePaw's ears. The ground shook, and then, FatePaw's eyes opened.

The vision was over. FatePaw shakily rose to his paws, quickly looking around to see if any cat had noticed. When he saw the bush still rustle, he realized he must've only been out for a heartbeat. It was still raining, and the raindrop was still dripping down the bridge of his muzzle, and then slowly fell. Sound returned to his ears, almost blowing him off his paws.

FallenPaw burst out of the bushes, laughing. DewPaw followed, and the two friends dashed into camp, laughing. FatePaw glanced over at FallenPaw, and FallenPaw seemed to notice his glance. He ran over, his paws slamming in the puddles below him. FallenPaw skidded to a halt, his paws almost falling in-front of him as he slowed to a stop. FatePaw drew his head back to avoid most of the splash, shaking his ears.

FallenPaw shook himself, water splashing out as his fur fluffed out. FatePaw almost burst out in laughter, FallenPaw looked like a cloud! His fur was so puffed out and bristled, his eyes wide. Well, what could be seen as his eyes. FallenPaw seemed to see his amusement and quickly drew his paw over his fur, flattening it. He looked a bit annoyed.

The memory of the vision flashed in his mind...older FallenPaw staring at older FatePaw in anger...blood soaking his pelt...he flinched back as it flashed in-front of his eyes. The reminder faded away, replacing the angry, older FallenPaw, with a confused, present age one. FallenPaw was staring at his brother like he had grown wings and had flown away into the stars above. His jaw was gaped open, and he forced it shut, one eyebrow raised in question.

"FatePaw? Why did you...flinch away from me?" His voice did not show any fear, but FatePaw could hear it behind the confusion. FallenPaw blinked slowly, a frown crossing his face. His ears flattened. "FatePaw?" the ginger tom seemed to take a step back, his eyes wide with skepticism. FatePaw stared at his paws, pelt pricking with culpability.

"I...I had a vision." He whispered.

"and you believed it?" FallenPaw retorted, tail lashing.

"no...but it was a glimpse of the future, FallenPaw." FatePaw spoke into the air, his mew barely audible. Tension filled the air, but FallenPaw mostly looked hurt.

"And I was evil in it, huh?" His voice grew damp, sounding wounded. "I was a killer and you just go... "oh well! Guess I will fear my brother now!"" His voice grew shrill, a bit mocking. His green eyes burned like fire. FatePaw took a step back, heart pounding his chest.

"no! I'm not scared...we just....need to be careful! Everything can change." FatePaw said quietly. FallenPaw muttered something to himself and FatePaw struggled to understand what he said. "What was that?"

"I said, perhaps you saw it wrong! Perhaps *you* just overreact *so much* that *you* mess up the clan, FatePaw!" FallenPaw spat, his hackles rising. Venom lanced his tone. His ears flattened against his head and pure anger filled his eyes, cold and challenged. FallenPaw rounded up near FatePaws face, hurt and anger steaming off of his pelt. it rippled in the air. "I thought you believed in me, FatePaw! I thought you knew me better than starclan, and that you trusted me more than starClan. But now you get some vision and you change your mind?" His voice trembled, his eyes darting back and forth.

The anger dissolved into hopelessness, yet FallenPaw made no apology for his anger. He had seemed to calm himself down, though? He stared into FatePaw's gaze, his eyes growing upset. "You..really don't trust me, anymore? You think I need *help* to not turn out evil?" His tail drooped, his voice cracking. The rain kept falling. FatePaw opened his mouth to deny the claim, but nothing came out.

Just *silence* filled the air, only replaced by the steady drum of rain. FatePaw stared at his brother as rain drenched them both, running down their fur. No birds sang, no mice squeaked. The sky was dark with clouds, lightning flashing. Thunder broke the silence as the

light hid FallenPaw in the brightness. FatePaw was blinded for a moment, but when he regained vision, FallenPaw's angry look had changed to misery. The tension in the air had changed to a gaping, empty feeling of melancholy. Shadows covered FallenPaw and FatePaw.

The brothers stared in silence, before FallenPaw turned away, shaking his head. FatePaw watched as his brother dragged himself to the apprentices den, his paws trailing behind him. Feeling empty inside, FatePaw walked over to his own nest, misery running through him.

Of course he trusted FallenPaw! Only FallenPaw did not see it... guilt pricked his pelt as he remembered his fear, and he already wished he had not taken a step back. *I messed up...I really messed up...*

"Hey, what's bothering you? Did some cat shove thorns down your throat?" The voice of BerryBush filled the den, breaking the stillness in the air. FatePaw looked up at the golden cat, to see that their ears were flattened with worry. FatePaw looked down, avoiding their piercing orange eyes. "FatePaw." Their voices hardened and they sat down by FatePaw. "Look at me."

FatePaw looked up at them, expecting anger in their eyes, but only saw concern and care. He felt himself relax and sat up, his tail wrapping around his paws.

"I...Me and FallenPaw got into an... argument." FatePaw said quietly. BerryBush nodded in understanding.

"that's what I thought. I saw your brother walk away from you. He seemed upset. What happened? You two have always been stuck together like twigs in a flood!" BerryBush pressed.

"I...got scared of him, for a moment," FatePaw's voice hushed. "FallenPaw? He...he noticed...and he got upset." His voice rose to a wail. "I am not scared of him, really, i'm not! It was just..." he trailed off.

"Just what? Did you have a vision?" BerryBush demanded, leaning

forward. Their whiskers twitched eagerly.

FatePaw shook his head. "no...it's..it's nothing." BerryBush did not respond to that. All they did was turn away, resting their tail on his shoulder before walking away. FatePaw sunk into his nest, closing his eyes, feeling worse than ever.

Chapter Five

"Attack!" The warrior yowled, her voice rising over the rain that pelted down. Narrowed eyes seemed to glare daggers at the tom facing her, and the tom let his fur rise, a yowl keening deep in his throat. It was quiet, yet fierce.

The tom leapt at the molly, his paws tumbling her over as thunder crashed above. He let out a victorious yowl, his eyes gleaming. The molly hissed, the rain turning her russet brown fur dark. The younger tom let his paws sink into the mud, the dirt getting in between his unsheathed claws.

He lifted his muzzle, and got off the molly, who looked a bit grumpy to be soaked. She shook her pelt out, and it poofed out, darkened brown by mud. The wind guffawed, bellowing around the area. The grumpiness faded from the mollies' eyes to be replaced by warmth and praise.

"DewPaw! You did great!" She purred, her tail had risen high in the air to show her happiness. DewPaw felt like he was floating above in the treetops, soaring above the territory like a bird. He puffed his chest out, pride filling his gaze. He did not need to speak to show his emotions. They headed back to camp.

As a kit, the clan had tried to lead him down the path of an elder. Too useless to be a warrior, or healer. Too useless for anything besides sitting in a den with the old cats and surviving. Nothing but an elder, as if he were frail and old, weak, unable to hunt no more. As if!

Despite the soothing mews, and the looks of pity bestowed against his pelt...and the whispers...The gazes. No matter what the others said or thought, he pushed through. Even when FinShadow had

insisted that DewPaw would be safe as an elder...and away from FallenPaw...that he should not start training, DewPaw had made sure to refuse the spot of the elder when OwlStar had asked him. He remembered it like it was yesterday.

DewKit was playing moss ball with his best friend, FallenKit, batting it across the clearing. FallenKit hissed happily, but seemed to freeze as some cat spoke behind the two of them, sounding a bit annoyed and leering. DewKit turned around to see SandFur looking down at them, a sneer present on his muzzle.

"Aw, if it isn't the mute one, and the murderous one. You both fit in together! And what I mean by that is in starclan." He laughed, looking at his paws as if the topic bored him. DewPaw felt anger build up in him, but he could not say anything. Anger bubbled up at his paws, although he was sure it looked like he was sulking. Like a weakling. Angry tears filled his eyes. He shook with anger.

He stared up at SandFur, his gaze narrowed in a challenge while FallenKit stared at the ground, eyes filled with tears, claws tearing the grass and dirt. DewPaw bared his teeth, fluffing his fur out and letting out a hiss, leaping towards SandFur in small bounds. SandFur looked bored at first, but grew more nervous as DewKit got closer. He stared right into the kit's eyes.

DewKit stared right back. Tension filled the air and silence seemed to fill the clearing. Happy chatter died down and cats stared, some looking surprised. Some shaking heads in horror. He saw his mother, BriarDust, run over, looking frantic. She tried to shoo DewKit away, but he remained in place, staring into the eyes of SandFur.

BriarDust pleaded with him to go, distraught, but he shoved past her, gaze unflinching. BriarDust sighed and watched.

He could tell everything about a cat just by looking into the eyes, this time of SandFur.

SandFur? Oh, the thought amused him and made his blood boil. SandFur was insecure, but held to a strict policy of power. He thinks that since the past leader was his father, he has his own. *Weak. Hoping to uphold his fathers legacy. Very honorable and protective*

against the clan, but only to those he deemed worthy enough.

SandFur swallowed, before backing away. DewKit grinned. He had defeated SandFur. Cats stared, jaws gaping. Eyes wide. None of them thought he was capable of defending himself. But he knew he was.

OwlStar leaped off his walk, his gaze not betraying anything. He rested his tail on DewKit, nodded.

"Come with me," he spoke softly, as if his voice was lathered by feathers. DewKit nodded, not a tinge of nervousness in his pelt. DewKit followed OwlStar, elated with excitement. OwlStar seemed approving.

They left camp, and OwlStar seemed to have no concern for DewKit as he climbed over logs and twigs. DewKit reached the first one, looking up at it in horror. He swallowed, but then he shoved his hesitation away. He wriggled his haunches and leapt up, and grinned. He pulled himself the rest of the way up, and measured the distance to the floor before leaping down.

OwlStar looked at DewKit with a look that told him he was proud and respectful of DewKits success. Shocked, even.

"I knew you would make it." His voice traveled smoothly across the clearing and DewKit nodded. He stopped and looked at OwlStar, waiting for him to speak.

"You have a great chance of success, DewKit. You have more experience and skill than other kits your age. If FallenKit had tried to follow, he would not have made it here. You have determination."

DewKit felt joy rise in him. OwlStar believed in him! Warriors never had, elders never have. BriarDust never did...But OwlStar did. That must mean something! He stared at OwlStar, hoping to hear what he wanted to hear.

"You will be a warrior, DewKit. No matter what others want and think. You will be a strong, powerful warrior, no matter what others think." His gaze grew a bit shadowed. "And you can keep FallenKit on the path of lightness." He mewed, half to himself. As if he knew more to the prophecy than he let on. He suddenly looked very old and tired.

DewKit was confused. OwlStar had always been supportive of his friend, even bringing him prey and playing moss ball with him. Why did he seem wary? OwlStar seemed to notice.

"it's not that I don't trust him-but, I need to make sure. A prophecy is a prophecy..." OwlStar said quietly. "Just incase, alright? I care for FallenKit, he is a good kit, but he can get angry at times. His clanmates will use that against him."

DewKit stared in disbelief. Why couldn't OwlStar do this, instead of DewKit? Was he scared? He stared at his paws, all of his inspiration and adoration towards OwlStar vanishing, fading away like a cloud. Even OwlStar, the one who seemed to care, was wary of his own clanmate? His friend's kit?

He looked away, gazing bitterly. OwlStar looked lost, his gaze shadowed. He swallowed, voice trembling. All of his honor and bravery seemed to break, and pricks of sadness echoed off the tom.

"I lost a cat dear to me in the storm. StoneStar." He whispered, tears pricking his gaze. DewKit looked back at him. OwlStar was a mess. He knew the story. StoneStar had entrusted OwlStar to lead the clan to safety, keep every cat safe. But the story longed before that. Every cat knew that StoneStar had taken OwlStar as one of his own, raising him as a son, though not through blood. Through love. He had always been supportive of OwlStar and the two had shared a close father-son bond no other cat had.

Then he had lost that father figure. StoneStar had died to the storm, to the prophecy dooming FallenKit down the path of evil. No wonder OwlStar was wary. He was hoping to uphold a promise, a silent one, too StoneStar. He looked in the eyes of the short tom, deeming this true. Masses of guilt, longing and weariness seemed to echo deep in them. And...a small flame of fire seemed to burn in them, slightly, ready to explode.

His love towards FallenKit was not fake, no. But...it wasn't completely honest, either. DewKit knew that now, he could tell. But he also knew OwlStar would not hesitate to lose his life for FallenKit. He really did care. But...it was sort of like the relationship between DewKit and his mother. His mother loved him dearly, but was never really believing of

him becoming a warrior. She always fussed, always purred to him what kind of warrior he would be, but he knew it was all a lie.

Just a month ago, she had been talking to YewClaw about something. YewClaw had seemed a bit annoyed, and argumentative. He had walked over to hear YewClaw, he had heard the words "he will be a warrior! I don't care what you think. Our friendship is over." YewClaw had snarled, before heading off. He had seen the look of hurt in her gaze. Poor YewClaw... ThrushFur always seemed to look at her though, as if wishing to comfort her.

Was OwlStar really the same? A liar? He turned away, why did OwlStar have to ask him that?

The memory still punched him in the gut. Ever since, he had distanced himself from OwlStar, despite OwlStars attempts to speak to him. He looked up, seeing OwlStar look at him with a sadness in his gaze. He seemed to have a look in his eyes as if his paws wanted to carry himself over to DewPaw, but he forced himself not too. DewPaw returned the gaze, gaze cool. It traveled over the clearing.

Stop looking at me like that. You know I don't like you anymore. DewPaw thought. He felt the air stir behind him and looked to his side, to see FallenPaw by his side. He looked calm, perhaps from how DewPaw had helped him. His fur went down and he felt relaxed, safe, and cared for. A warmth crept in his heart and smiled at his friend, letting his warmth show in his gaze.

FallenPaw headed forward and rested his muzzle in DewPaws fur, before drawing away. A look of concern filled his gaze.

"Are you okay?"

Yes, I'm fine He thought, nodding to let FallenPaw know. It was a lie, but then again, that was not the only secret he held from FallenPaw. He had many things he wanted to tell his friend, but he never could. Every cat trusted him with secrets. Which meant always carrying the burden of many things, never able to speak it out loud. He shivered, remembering OwlStars secret words to him. He always wanted to let his friend know, but he could not.

That was not the only secret he knew. He knew so many secrets, so many cats had used him as an advantage, spilling secrets and truths without even asking. Plus, DewPaw could not say anything about it, right?

He hated it. Whenever cats just told him, he made sure to let them know he did not like it. He would walk away, he would curl his muzzle or flick his tail. No cat got the message. None but FallenPaw. FallenPaw saw every part of him, knew everything. Read the way he spoke through movements and expressions. He always had.

FallenPaw cared, and he always had. Always will, too.DewPaw already knew how his life would turn out. He would become a great, strong, respectful warrior. He would care for the clan, love them, and defend them with his life. He would swear the oath of the warrior code and keep it that way, and he would die loyal.

DewPaw always knew he would have a safe friendship with FallenPaw, no matter what others would say about him. DewPaw would always be there for FallenPaw, and FallenPaw the same. They had promised themselves that, just last night.

FallenPaw turned to look at DewPaw, and DewPaw opened his eyes tiredly. FallenPaw smiled, reaching towards DewPaw. he whispered.

"DewPaw?" He whispered, his eyes wide. His fluffy tail was over his own paws, and his ears were tipped to the side. DewPaw nodded.

"I swear my life that I will always be here for you, and protect you, no matter what." He whispered, looking at DewPaws eyes. DewPaw looked deep into the eyes of FallenPaw, and knew he spoke the truth. FallenPaw reached his paw forward. "Do you swear that you will return the favor? That our friendship will always be here, no matter the judgment."

DewPaw nodded, reaching his paw forward. They touched, and FallenPaw smiled. "Goodnight, DewPaw " DewPaw rolled over onto his back, looking at the den and the stars peeping through the brambles. I promise, FallenPaw. I will protect you, no matter how it affects me. Always.

Chapter Six

FallenPaw was hunched over his nest, eyes filled with a deep longness. He let his eyes close, his tail limp to his side. Deep pangs of sorrow pulsed him. Bile seemed to rise in his throat, as if a rock was building up in it. Tears filled his eyes, and he stared at his paw, which was trembling. A wave of dizziness hit him as he remembered the way FatePaw had looked at him.

A choked cry of distress coming out of his throat, he dug his claws in the moss. FatePaw had been *scared. Scared* of him. FatePaw's eyes had been wide with terror, his hackles had risen. His tail had been curved under himself, showing nervousness. And he had his jaw agape, unable to speak. Sort've like DewPaw's mother, he realized.

She always looked at DewPaw, her eyes wide, ears shot up, pelt fluffed up with shock, when DewPaw did something great. Like, the time he had been able to let the cats he was patrolling where and when ShadowClan had been in their territory, with a series of hisses, points of tail, and paw movements. DewPaw was strong.

And DewPaw was the only one who ever trusted him fully. DewPaw, and OwlStar. And...a few others. But most? They never truly did.

And FatePaw. Or... he thought. But now, he knew the truth. FatePaw had trusted him-but something had changed that. Had it been a prophecy? Did FatePaw trust StarClan more than him? He closed his eyes.

"FallenPaw?" ThrushFur stood at the entrance, peering her head in. She scrutinized her downcast apprentice, and seemed to determine that he was sad, and sad only. She headed in, the way thrumming softly behind her. She sat down by his nest, looking at him.

"Would you mind telling me what's bothering you?" She asked.

"Nothing's bothering me," he muttered, glowering.

"Something's clearly wrong, FallenPaw! You are hunched in your nest, looking like a mouse soaked in rain after a bad day! You are not okay, or you would be with DewPaw and smiling as if nothing ever bothered you, you mouse brain!" ThrushFur retorted, her tail lashing, brows ceased in worry. FallenPaw was surprised by the fierceness in her voice.

"I said, nothing is wr-

"I am not an idiot, FallenPaw! I have had kits before, remember?" A bit of anguish filled her tone, and she looked away, before whispering, "just tell me, alright? I can help you.." she whispered. FallenPaw realized she had not forgiven herself for not being able to help PuddleKit, with a stab of condolence. So, he spoke.

"alright...it is FatePaw," he mewed in a quiet, muted tone, his claws sheathing and unsheathing. ThrushFur looked confused. The sadness was replaced with concern.

"What happened with FatePaw?" She queried him, making sure to keep her tone soft and warm. FallenPaw explained what happened. The look, the quiet tone... ThrushFur listened, not daring to cut him off. Afterwards, she sat by him, resting her tail on his shoulder.

"Do you want to talk about it?" she asked him softly, as if he were her own kit. In some ways, she was like a mother. He loved her for that. He shook his head, he did not really want to talk about it. Now that he had let someone know, he felt a bit better. Perhaps he should do that more often. He lay his head back on his paws, and ThrushFur frowned, before smirking. She raised her eyebrows.

"So DewPaw, hmm?" She poked fun at him, her eyes scrunched up with amusement. FallenPaw stared in confusion, before coming to realization. His ears grew red and he nearly stumbled back in shock and embarrassment, his heart seeming too tingle. He reared back, a nervous grin crossing his face.

"W-what?" He exploded, sounding hot and embarrassed. "No! DewPaw is just a friend, I DO NOT have a crush on him, I!" he covered his paws over his eyes and groaned in embarrassment. ThrushFur let out a giggle.

"Oh, but that's the thing. I never said you liked him!" She teased, poking him with her tail. FallenPaw buried his head in his moss, flustered.

OH STARCLAN! She never had, he realized. Was she right? Did he like DewPaw?

"I- you-SHUT UP!!! I BET YOU LIKE YEWFUR!" He quickly mewed, rising to his paws, remembering what DewPaw said. Now it was ThrushFurs time to look awkward. FallenPaw laughed, throwing a moss ball at her. ThrushFur reared back in shock, before throwing one back. "You'll never catch me!" She purred, dashing away. FallenPaw gave chase.

The sun glittered, seeping into the den through the woven brambles. FallenPaw cracked his eye open, groaning. It was dawn, but the sunlight seemed as bright as ever. Rubbing his eyes with his paw, he mewed a good morning to DewPaw-who was silently snoring-AND HAD MOSS ON HIS NOSE! Nearly breaking out in laughter, he slowly batted it away, startling DewPaw awake.

DewPaw looked startled for a moment, his eyes wide, before relaxing. He looked at FallenPaw with a look of mock annoyance, as if asking, why'd you *bonk* me? FallenPaw puffed out his chest, grinning playfully. He let out a fake growl and faced the moss.

"that, that moss! That moss DARED to attack you! That is why I

bonked you!" He mewed, waving his paws around. He grabbed the moss and threw it at a rock. It slid down with a thump. "Like that! But, it hit YOU! Like BAM!!!!" He threw the moss again, but it is turned and hit DewPaw square in the face. FallenPaw quickly ran out, and stuck his head in.

"I wasn't here! This was a dream! It was the moss! BYE!!!" FallenPaw dashed away, laughing oh so evilly. Okay, perhaps not so evil. Just a little evil. A few warriors looked at him, looking quite perplexed. ThrushFur was shaking her head, talking to herself, but her eyes glittered.

That's when moss struck him in the back of the head. FallenPaw turned around, eyes googling , to see DewPaw. He was holding a huge wad of moss in his jaw, flicking his tail in challenge. FallenPaw chuckled in the back of his throat, DewPaw had no idea who he was against. He grabbed the thrown moss, and threw it at DewPaw. DewPaw leapt up and caught it, winking.

FallenPaw raised an eyebrow and turned around, and walked away. He could sense DewPaws confusion. Then, he turned around, and ran straight at DewPaw. Before DewPaw could run, FallenPaw crashed into him, and then both went spinning. FallenPaw laughed.

Uh-oh, ThrushFur looked cranky. Quickly rising to his paws, he shot DewPaw a goodbye and bounced over to ThrushFur. She mewed a greeting.

"Hello FallenPaw. Today we will be doing dawn patrol, so, good thing you are awake." ThrushFur told him, looking tired. FallenPaw nodded.

"Who else are we going with?" He asked, looking around. Not many cats seemed awake.

"Well, for one, MouseTail, and then, WeepingGaze." ThrushFur responded. FallenPaw spotted WeepingGaze-she was a pretty black tortoiseshell cat with orange and golden brindle markings. The molly padded over to them, looking a bit annoyed.

"MouseTail is still asleep! Even though I've shaken him awake,

what, seven times now?" She huffed, her chest fluffing out. Her annoyance seemed to grow when MouseTail stuck his head out of the den, blinking his eyes tiredly.

"I am up!" He yawned, slowly walking towards the patrol.

"Yeah, like after me waking you up *seven times*." WeepingGaze muttered grumpily. MouseTail laughed.

"You're just grumpy because you hate mornings. Just last night you-

"Shhh! They don't need to know that!" WepingGaze exclaimed, looking embarrassed. ThrushFur grinned.

"What happened?" She asked innocently. WeepingGaze locked away, muttering insanity under her breath.

"She was leaping around in the stream last night! No wonder she's so tired-and get this-I caught her doing it! WeepingGaze, famous hater of water, actually *loves* water!" He said cheekily, all of his tiredness had apparently vanished. WeepingGaze smacked him with her tail, but she looked flustered.

"Oh, shut up!" She flashed, still looking embarrassed. MouseTail just smiled with his cheeky grin and dashed off.

"I'm the leader of the patrol! Follow *me!"* ThrushFur groaned as her brother dashed off, quickly giving chase and outpacing him. FallenPaw just stared, and shared a look with WeepingGaze.

"It's *dawn.* How are they leaping around like they've just been told they get to go to the gathering," WeepingGaze droned out, one eyebrow raised in confusion. "I will never understand siblings."

They followed the two others and eventually, after lots of chasing around, ThrushFur managed to keep the lead and keep the patrol more organized. The sun was rising more, making the grass glitter as light shone on the damp drops of water from the earlier dew.

Crickets chirped as the day began. The patrol advanced forward, but it was peaceful. Quiet. FallenPaw was looking for any signs of intruders.

A twig snapped. FallenPaw looked to the direction of the sound, ears alert. He opened his mouth and scent glands to smell the air. Rouge. He used his tail to let the others. ThrushFur stood infront of FallenPaw protectively.

A cat with a huge mane around his neck walked out. He had beautiful, golden fur, and condescending orange eyes. He had a long muzzle, large ears, and a very long tail. Dark brown stripes covered his legs and face.

He raised his muzzle, scanning the patrol. ThrushFur growled.

"What are you doing here, intruder?" She hissed. The tom just blinked.

"Smooth your fur, lad. You're freaking out over nothing." He mewed calmly. FallenPaw shivered. His voice seemed to travel across the lands, so cold, yet powerful...

ThrushFur looked unimpressed.

"And you're here?" She trailed off as the tom padded right towards them.

"You haven't even heard my name!" The golden tom protested. "My name is Atticus, to those it may concern," he looked at FallenPaw for a moment, before looking back at ThrushFur, who still looked angry.

"Fine, I'll tell you! Calm down! I'd like to join your clan." Atticus told her, dipping his head. ThrushFur looked untrustworthy still, but she nodded.

"Why should we? You're a loner, and I don't like the looks of you. Something about you..." ThrushFur mewed coldly. FallenPaw frowned. Why didn't ThrushFur like Atticus? She always seemed open to strangers-what was different about Atticus? Atticus was charming for StarsClan's sake! And kind, and polite! Yet, ThrushFur still looked annoyed.

"No, ThrushFur!" FallenPaw growled. "We will bring him to camp, as we have with other loners and rogues," he snapped. ThrushFur

had no right to distrust this tom! ThrushFur sighed,

"Ok... FallenPaw, you take the back. I will take the front and the others will take the side." ThrushFur ordered swiftly. FallenPaw nodded evenly, before taking the back. Atticus looked back at FallenPaw floored eyes. FallenPaw found himself looking into them as if this tom had been through so much in his life.

"so, FallenPaw, is it?" Atticus mewed, making FallenPaw stare at him, astonished. How did he know? This tom seemed to know everything!

"How do you know my name?" He blubbered out as the patrol started heading back. Atticus shrugged, mumbling something under his breath.

"Dunno. Just do!" Atticus mewed, not looking flustered at all. He just smiled, a bit smugly, when ThrushFur was glaring at him from behind. "Your friend does not like me, I see." He mewed, sounding a bit confused. FallenPaw sighed,

"Yeah...she isn't normally like that," FallenPaw replied, shooting his mentor a glare. ThurshFur looked at FallenPaw, shaking her head. FallenPaw ignored her warning. ThrushFur looked away,"She's just tired!"

At these words, ThrushFur looked back at him. Hurt stung in her eyes, as well as anger.

"Tired? I was the first awake, FallenPaw. I am not tired. Something is off about this cat," she mewed stiffly. Her tail lashed. FallenPaw scowled, how could she judge a cat so easily?

"Really? Something is off?" He muttered all his respect for ThrushFur fading. ThrushFur opened her mouth to say something, but closed it, looking down. FallenPaw knew it, she was just being grumpy. He looked away.

"FallenPaw, wait-" ThrushFur started. FallenPaw looked up, his eyes narrowed. ThrushFur was suddenly staring at the tom as if she'd seen him before.

"What?" He growled. ThrushFur swallowed. She was trembling, as if the tom frightened her.

"I knew Atticus when we were kits-before I joined the clan," She started to mew, glaring at him. "Thats why I feel off...I remember a vow he made. A vow we made to a horrible cat." Her eyes grew haunted. "It was too..."

"No!" Atticus mewed, his eyes wide. He rubbed his paws on the ground, his voice suddenly dropping sadly. "I-I don't follow that tyrant anymore, Thrush..." He said quietly. Had these two known each other?

"It's ThrushFur now!" ThrushFur said coldly. "You followed his word for moons, when I broke away from it at eight moons!" Her voice rose. "I told you that he-

"ThrushFur!" FallenPaw's fur rose angrily. "You have no right to not trust him. He has changed, and plus, you made the vow too!" He stood by Atticus's side, feeling small next to the large tom, who had his ears flat and eyes wide with guilt.

ThrushFur looked alarmed.

"I don't get why you can't let go of the past! You are always sad about what has already happened, that you can barely see infront of yourself anymore! You seem so insistent to be a mother to me, but my mother is dead." He hissed. "You will never be my mother, so quit bossing me around like you are!"

ThrushFur flinched as if struck.

"FallenPaw, you don't understand! Atticus stood to the vow almost his whole life! He even-

"The past is the past, ThrushFur! You need to get other it, all of it. You are no mother of mine! Atticus has been nothing but kind to us, so leave him alone," he finished, before glancing at the tom.

The yellow tom still seemed upset, until he noticed FallenPaw looking at him. He smiled, but ThrushFur quickened her pace, blinking her eyes. Her shoulders grew stiff at FallenPaw's words as

if hurt by them. The rest of the patrol was silent.

Once they got back, ThrushFur headed to the leader's den, flanking Atticus to it. She didn't even share a glance with FallenPaw as she headed into the den to speak to OwlStar. Mews started to fill the clearing, everyone seemed to notice a stranger had entered the camp.

GooseEye walked up to FallenPaw, the usual hostile-ness in his gaze replaced with bafflement. He dipped his head in well-mannered way, eyes level. Below that, FallenPaw could see a hurt, bitter anger.

"FallenPaw," he greeted tactfully. He looked like he would rather speak to another cat, but FallenPaw it was.

"GooseEye," FallenPaw returned the greeting. He remembered GooseEye's support towards SandFur at the meeting, with bitterness. The words echoed in his mind. But he kept his gaze kind. GooseEye seemed to do the same.

"Who is that rogue in camp?"

"His name is Atticus, and ThrushFur knows him. She doesn't trust him." FallenPaw muttered. GooseEye's eyes grew wide with remembrance as FallenPaw said the tom's name and his ears flattened.

"I wouldn't trust him either. He did bad things. He is here to stir trouble!" GooseEye growled, his anger for once, directed at some cat else. FallenPaw curled his lip. GooseEye, too!

Was he the only one who thought a cat could change? Atticus had seemed upset and guilty-why would he risk his pelt if he wasn't? Plus, ThrushFur and GooseEye must've made the vow too, and they seemed like pretty decent warriors. Besides the fact that GooseEye judged him. They were most likely just being reminded of the group they used to rank upon. They had been just as bad as Atticus, if he had even been bad.

FallenPaw knew what his job was now- to make Atticus feel

welcome, despite what others said. Perhaps finally, he would have a cat to understand him.

EXCLUSIVE CHAPTER!

ThrushFur was in camp, sitting alone. Golden fur edged the edge of her eye, and she glanced over, seeing Atticus mewing goodnight to FallenPaw, before slipping into the warrior's den. FallenPaw looked up and caught ThrushFurs gaze on accident. His expression turned frigid, and he coldly looked away.

ThrushFur looked back at him, her ears flattening as the tom cat looked away, heading to his own den. ThrushFur stared at where he had been, and couldn't help but as if she had lost her kit again. FallenPaw's words repeated in her mind, constantly reminding her of how FallenPaw saw her. Not as a mother, not even a mother figure.

Nothing but a mentor to be mad at. She knew she had to stop being selfish... of course FallenPaw didn't have to see her that way! Why should he? She was not his real mother, and never would be. She was just a vilomah, a kit-less mother. A mother who's kit had been ripped away from her harshly.

Yet, it still hurt. ThrushFur breathed in, heading out of camp. The stars glittered above, seeming to burn into ThrushFur's fur. She looked at the stars, eyes wide. Did all of StarClan judge her? Was she being a bad cat? What if PuddleKit was watching coldly from above, hissing about how her mother was being a selfish, self-attached cat? She couldn't bear to think of the look of hatred in her kit's amber eye's.

She remembered PuddleKit. Her laugh...her excitement, her eagerness to become a warrior of ThunderClan, ready to serve... sometimes ThrushFur wished she could sink into the dirt below and join her kit in the stars above. Join her family, and be whole again. A hole had seemed to gap open into her, tearing her apart.

FallenPaw had filled that hole. She remembered when she had first been given him to nurse. FinShadow had roughly thrown FallenKit towards her while another warrior had softly put FateKit by his

brother, and had asked ThrushFur to give them her milk, since she still had some leftover from PuddleKit.

The rain had settled down, and ThrushFur was hiding under the bush, shaking. Her ears were flat to her head and she felt little tremors pass through her. PuddleKit was gone, washed away by water.

"ThrushFur?" the gentle voice of BerryPaw filled the air, and ThrushFur looked up at her sister, her eyes wide with grief. BerryPaw seemed shocked too. BerryPaw had a kit in her jaw, YewClaw beside her, holding another kit. ThrushFur looked away, feeling sick.

"No.." she whispered, already knowing what her sister wanted from her. What YewClaw wanted, what FinShadow would want. They wanted her to take care of these kits...their mother must have died in the storm. These kits had no mother to nurse them... and ThrushFur was the only queen who could nurse them.

BriarDust was already stressed enough with her newborn, and she was sick with grief, due to her only kit born alive being mute. She had just figured out the day before and was convinced he would not be a warrior. ThrushFur knew the heartbroken molly was wrong, but either way, she knew BriarDust would not be a good nurser to the kits.

"I can't..." she whispered, shutting her eyes tight and refusing to look at the newly born kits. She didn't want to make PuddleKit feel she was replacing her...and, she herself did not want to replace her kit.

"Its what PuddleKit would want," BerryPaw insisted, their voice growing a bit fierce. "These kits will die without a mother, they need someone to nurse them. You won't be replacing her, ThrushFur," they seemed to have read ThrushFurs mind. ThrushFur opened one eye, looking at the mewling kits.

She could already imagine PuddleKit looking at her with wide eyes, mewing to her. She knew what she would say, the exact words. She could hear her kit's voice in the ear, as if her spirit from StarClan were visiting her.

"Momma, you gotta take them! I'm having so much fun in the stars but it's sad without you, I don't want them to be sad without FinShadow. I'll

take care of DewStream, and you take care of the kits. Promise?"

ThrushFur looked up, and felt her heart break. Her kit was *here, as a StarClan spirit. DewStream stood by her, and PuddleKit looked so small next to DewStream. Yet, she looked so happy, and healthy. Stars streamed in her fur and glittered, and she blinked earnestly.*

ThrushFur gulped, looking at her kit in silence. She reached towards her, and her paw went through her kit. Was this the only way she could touch her kit? She nodded slowly.

"I..I promise," she vowed. PuddleKit twisted in the air joyfully, her eyes closing happily. DewStream dipped her head, and ThrushFur knew DewStream would care for her kit in the stars. DewStream turned away and seemed to climb the sky. PuddleKit glanced back at ThrushFur and smiled, before following DewStream to the stars. Then, they were gone.

BerryPaw stared at her with wide eyes, looking a bit confused. "Who were you talking to?" She asked. ThrushFur smiled.

"Someone special," she said quietly. "But, I'll take the kits. Put them by me," she said, her eyes glittering. BerryPaw nodded, and set the kit down. YewClaw put down the other. BerryPaw mewed a goodbye, she had to go to the MoonPool to bring OwlHeart, to get his nine lives.

ThrushFur looked at YewClaw awkwardly, she was standing there, looking at the kits. ThrushFur paused.

"so...what are the kits' names?" She asked YewClaw, looking at the warrior. YewClaw sat down, looking at them.

"FallenKit and FateKit," YewClaw softly mumbled, pointing at each one in turn. ThrushFur brought the kits to her stomach, and they suckled. ThrushFur looked up at YewClaw, they had never really talked. ThrushFur had always been more of a quiet type. She looked at her paws, feeling out of place.

"You know...you do seem pretty....cool," YewClaw mewed. "Friends?"

ThrushFur looked at the warrior, unsure on how to respond. She just nodded.

"Yes, friends." She smiled. The kits by her side snuggled into her belly, and purred.

ThrushFur's ears pricked, she could hear a rustling from behind. She sniffed the air, it was a sweet scent. YewClaw. She turned around to see the fluffy molly heading towards her. ThrushFur looked at her silently as YewClaw sat by her, resting her tail on her paws. She looked at ThrushFur.

"What's wrong?" she asked softly, looking worried. ThrushFur looked down at her paws, sighing.

"It's FallenPaw," she mewed bleakly, staring at the ground. "We got into a fight..."

YewClaw nodded. "I know," she said softly. ThrushFur swallowed and looked away.

"It's just that...we can't trust Atticus!" her claws dug into the dirt, sheathing and unsheathing. "He did terrible things when he was a part of the chosen..." her gaze shadowed, "when...I was part of the chosen."

YewClaw frowned. "The chosen? You've never really told us much about that," she questioned. ThrushFur shut her eyes, not wanting to remember. But...she had too.

"We used to be a clan," she said quietly. She smiled, remembering the clan. They had been noble, proud...they had been too much. "But the clan grew...it kept growing, too quickly," she remembered the cold nights. How cats starved, how the territory could barely hold so much. "So...a cat called ClockWork...he...he started the chosen." She remembered that night...ClockWork had woken her and a few others up..."

"what happened with the...chosen?" YewClaw whispered.

"ClockWork told us that the clan would die if it kept growing...so every moon..." she closed her eyes, feeling sick. "We...he chose a few cats to be killed. Mostly kits, elders and apprentices," she

explained. "And every moon, he sent out another cat to get rid of them,"

YewClaw stared at ThrushFur in horror. "Did you?..."

ThrushFur shook her head.

"...no. When I was chosen to do it...that's when I ran," she said quietly. "But Atticus did not. I... he didn't run. I'm not sure what he did, but...I can't trust him!" her voice grew shaky. It was still raining. She was surprised to feel YewClaw's paw rest on her own. She looked at the warrior in shock.

"ThrushFur, there's nothing you could have done. You weren't even seven moons old," she added. "Remember BlazePelt? He would hate seeing you like this," ThrushFur remembered her former mate with a pang.

ThrushPaw had finished training for the day. YewPaw looked at her, opening her mouth to greet her, but ThrushPaw hurried away, her ears flattening. She didn't need anyone, she couldn't trust anymore. She refused to look back as she slunk into her den, and curled up in her nest.

Another apprentice was asleep in here, but she refused to speak to the young cat, or even look to see who it was. She just buried her nose in her paws, her chest throbbing.

"Hey..." the apprentice spoke. ThrushPaw looked up, her ears flat. The apprentice was a tom with creamy white fur. He had ginger splotches with darker stripes on his face and flank, and his tail was ginger. His eyes were a piercing orange, and behind them seemed to shine decades of care and concern. Nothing fake there. She pricked her ears. The apprentice went on, "You... do seem pretty... cool," he said quietly, looking a bit nervous.

ThrushPaw was surprised that this apprentice seemed so quick to want to speak to the apprentice, who had come from an evil group and had ignored the whole world. Yet he looked at her, his eyes hopeful, his large ears twitching. She snorted,

"Cool? You must be mistaking me for YewPaw, or FinPaw," she laughed,

throwing her head back as if it were all some funny joke. The apprentice just stared at her and shook his head,

"Nope. You are ThrushPaw, and I definitely mean you," he mewed, sounding a bit unsure for a moment. He paused, looking down, and then mewed, "Friends?"

ThrushPaw nodded slowly, "Friends,"

Thunder jolted her out of the memory, and she flinched, her claws digging into the dirt as lightning struck straight after. YewClaw was staring at her, mouth agape, before she leaned forward and pushed her muzzle into ThrushFur's fur as a way to comfort.

ThrushFur almost drew back, surprise flashing through her pelt, but then she accepted the gesture warmly. She closed her eyes, letting herself relax as the rain pelted down on them. She pressed her head back into YewClaws pelt, and no one of them spoke for several moments.

Eventually, ThrushFur drew away, opening her eyes and looking at YewClaw. YewClaw seemed to sense this, opening her eyes, too.

"Let's get back to camp, okay?" She asked quietly. "It's no good staying out in the rain," she added, her voice soft. ThrushFur nodded and followed YewClaw back to camp, her eyes focused on the ground.

She thought of FallenPaw again, and his anger towards her. Her ears flat, she wondered if the apprentice would ever forgive her.

Chapter Seven

Tonight is the night of the gathering! FatePaw couldn't wait to finally meet cats from the other clans. He was finally allowed to go! He felt like he was floating on his paws when he thought of the gathering tonight.

It would be his first gathering, ever since he'd become an apprentice three moons ago. FallenPaw would be going, too! They'd be able to explore it together. The first moon, the gathering, had still been blocked by a fallen tree, from the storm all those moons ago. The second, FallenPaw had been chosen, but too many warriors had protested.

FallenPaw may have been grumpy at first, but with FatePaw, he had lightened up pretty quickly. Remembering their race, he smiled to himself a bit. A rustle from the hedge caused him to loom up. It was FallenPaw! The apprentice had walked into camp, seemingly. He paused, looking at the entrance in confusion, before shrugging and heading towards the prey pile.

Wagging his tail in excitement, FatePaw slowly crept towards his brother, his haunches swaying. *He'll never see me coming!* He couldn't wait to frighten his brother, FallenPaw's shocked expression was not one to forget! His tail curled up in amusement. Letting out a quiet purr, he crouched down and leaped at his brother, paws stretched out.

As he knocked his brother down, he expected for FallenPaw to roll over, and pin him below his strong paws. That's what they always did, FallenPaw being as great a fighter as he was. Suddenly, he was knocked off of his brother. Any moment now...

He was left in the dust. His jaw agape, he hauled himself up. He rose an eyebrow quizzically, looking at FallenPaw in turn. FallenPaw was sitting, licking his paw.

"Come on FallenPaw, you always fight back!" He mewed, crouching

down in a way to tempt his brother. He waited excitedly, but his tail lowered when FallenPaw rose to his paws and shied away. His brother seemed to avoid his hurt gaze,

"Sorry, FatePaw, I don't have time to play games," he muttered, still not looking FatePaw in the eye. "I'm looking for Atticus. He left camp, but I couldn't find him...so I came to see if he's here," his words trailed off and he looked down at his paws. The tension between the two of them was so thick that FatePaw was sure he could tear his claws through it and still not get a rip. He hesitated, before saying,

"I could help you if you'd like," he mewed, slowly taking a step toward his brother. He was afraid that if he stepped too close, FallenPaw would snarl at him about his fear. *I'm sorry about that, FallenPaw! I didn't mean it, I swear!* He wanted to wail the words out loud, but something held him back. What if FallenPaw refused his apology?

"No, it's fine...I'm sure he's here anyways," he mewed quickly, now staring at a bug on the ground intently. His tail flicked. FatePaw's ears flattened,

"Please, FallenPaw!" he begged; his eyes wide. Surely his brother would let him help? He wasn't still upset, was he? "Two pairs of eyes are better than one, aren't they?" He added, leaning towards his brother. His heart froze as he waited for a reply.

FallenPaw sighed. After what seemed like forever, he mewed,

"Okay, fine. You can help me look," FallenPaw grumbled, rising to his paws. He rolled his eyes a bit, but padded over to FatePaw, his tail drew to his side. "Cmon, let's go check the warriors den," as the two headed towards it, FallenPaw breathed in, "Look, FatePaw..."

FatePaw glanced at his brother, "Yes?" He asked. His heart raced. *Please don't shout at me...*

"I'm sorry for being so harsh to you," he mewed, looking at his brother. "Of course, I had the right to be upset, and I still am, but..." his words seemed to vanish and jumble up. "but... the way I reacted

wasn't right. I said terrible things I shouldn't have,"

"It's okay," he mewed, "You were rightfully upset. You were sure I was scared of you, but I assure you, I'm not," he mewed, his voice catching in his throat. He willed his brother to believe him.

"I know," FallenPaw mewed thickly, but from the tone of his voice, FatePaw knew he was lying. At least he wasn't hissing. They reached the warrior's den, and FatePaw poked his head in,

"Hello? Is a cat named Atticus here?" he mewed, tipping his head. ThrushFur looked up, something dark in her gaze. His gaze flashed to FallenPaw's, and her ears lowered. She turned away, and quietly mumbled,

"He's hunting, he'll be back for the gathering," before heading over to MilkFeather and exchanging words with her. FallenPaw turned away, scowling at ThrushFur. FatePaw was confused,

Didn't FallenPaw and ThrushFur have a close bond? Why was FallenPaw acting so cold? He flinched when his brother shoved past him, his eyes narrowed angrily. His tail shooting up in alarm, he chased after his brother.

"FallenPaw!" He gasped, "What's happened between you and ThrushFur? I thought you two were close!" He was sure they were! ThrushFur and FallenPaw had shared a mother-son bond... something terrible must've happened for the two to be so angry at each other. Sure, they'd gotten angry before... but they'd always made up by now. FallenPaw whipped around, his eyes narrowed in a cold fire.

"She didn't trust Atticus," he growled, his tail lashing. FatePaw swallowed uncomfortably, as his brother circled around him, his eyes full of anger and hurt. "Just because he made a STUPID mistake when he was younger, she decides he must be some evil tom looking for a problem," his claws dug into the earth. He closed his eyes, and breathed in, as if trying to calm himself down.

Was FallenPaw learning how to control his anger? Hope pricked at his paws, perhaps FallenPaw *could* prove the stupid prophecy

wrong. *And I won't have to kill him. We can live happily, forever.* He almost purred at the thought. Nothing had to change.

"What did she say about it?" FatePaw asked,

"She talked about some stupid group and how he made a "vow " that *she made too*! It shouldn't matter if he stayed longer, it's clear he's a changed cat now. She needs to accept more cats than she can redeem themselves." His voice was calmer now, but his eyes still glittered coldly. However, underneath the mask of anger, he could see hurt in his gaze.

"It reminds you of how cats think about *you*, doesn't it?" FatePaw asked softly. FallenPaw didn't answer, but he nodded. FatePaw sighed,

"FallenPaw, I'm sure it isn't the same. ThrushFur probably just has a bad past with him," he mewed, "You should try forgiving-

"I can't," FallenPaw mewed surly. "Not now. I'll see you later, FatePaw," his brother padded away. FatePaw, disappointed that he and FallenPaw had exchanged such little words, sat down with a sigh. He heard paw steps, and glanced aside to see BerryBush sitting beside him. He swallowed, feeling like he had thorns caught in his throat, and spoke,

"Hey BerryBush," his voice caught in his throat. BerryBush blinked sympathetically at him.

"Is it FallenPaw again?" They asked him softly. FatePaw nodded, his ears lowering. BerryBush went on, "did he get angry again?" FatePaw sighed,

"I...don't exactly know?" He hesitated. "He said he's sorry for snapping at me, but he's beyond angry at ThrushFur for not trusting Atticus," he looked down. Why couldn't FallenPaw just accept not everyone agreed with him about that tom? BerryBush nodded sadly,

"I'm afraid he'll always be like that," they mewed gravely. "Angry. It's always been a part of him," they seemed like they wanted to say something else, but they closed their muzzle quickly.

"He's improving," FatePaw told them, his voice growing light. "He's trying to control it,"

BerryBush sighed, rising to their paws. "Come with me," they mewed, their voice low. FatePaw nodded and followed suit. BerryBush left camp, looking around wearily before they pushed themselves on. *I wonder where they are taking me...* he thought. BerryBush jumped with ease over a log.

Crouching down, FatePaw tried to make the leap. He scrambled a twig-lengths away from the top and dug his claws in the wood. Dragging himself up, he clumsily fell over to the other side. BerryBush's whiskers twitched, and they helped him up. They had slowed to a stop and were standing by a thing of moss. He tipped his head, confused.

BerryBush sighed, "FatePaw, tell me what moss is for," FatePaw frowned. Did BerryBush think he was a mouse-brained kit? Even kittens knew this!

"For water and bedding, of course!" He mewed. BerryBush sat down, grabbing some of the moss in their jaws.

"Well, what if one day, I said I could...eat it?"

"Well, I'd call you a mouse-brained idiot," FatePaw snorted. Where was this heading? His pelt prickled uncomfortably as a look of cold honesty filled BerryBush's eyes. *I don't like where this is going...*

"Exactly. It isn't meant to be," she mewed. "Moss is destined to retrieve water, and make nests. Everything has a destiny, and everything must follow that destiny," FatePaw's eyes grew wide at the words. With a sinking feeling, he realized BerryBush was referring to him and FallenPaw.

"Not everything," he mewed hopelessly, his eyes wide. "Destinys can change, they've changed many times!" He looked at BerryBush, who was looking down at her paws. He wished she'd believe him. His ears drooped when she shook her head,

"Can the moss change its use?"

"No."

"Then you can't either, FatePaw." BerryBush looked away, as thunder boomed in the background. FatePaw backed away a bit,

"Yes, I can!" he wailed. "We can-

Suddenly, something seemed to press down on his throat. He gasped for air but struggled to get anymore. He dug his claws into the ground, letting out a choked gasp. He heard a panicked screech from BerryBush, before all was black.

"FatePaw!"

When FatePaw woke up, he was in a black void of nothingness. He looked around, his ears lowering.

"Hello?" he called, looking around. "Is anyone there?" He walked forward, as silent as stone. He whipped his head back in nervousness when something scurried around in the background. He backed away. Bile rose in his throat as heavy breathing filled the area. His ears flattened. A screech cut the air clean.

FatePaw let out a wail as his paws forced him forward. Something warm and sticky started to stain his paws, and he realized it was blood. Something gurgled out blood in pain. As FatePaw neared, he saw a pair of large, amber eyes gazing at him with agony.

"Not again..." he moaned. "Not again..." his eyes suddenly widened and he spasmed, his paws outstretching. "No!" the large tom snarled, "I am strong! I will not let pain shadow me," his eyes glazed over with pain again. As FatePaw neared, he got a view of the tom. The tom was a large tabby tom, his eyes a deep amber. A scratch was scarred over his nose. But what horrified FatePaw the most was the fact that his stomach was torn open. Each bone was exposed to the world.

"You got yourself here," the cold voice of a warrior spoke. FatePaw whipped around and stared at the molly. She stared coldly at the tom.

"What are you doing? You gotta help him!" FatePaw gasped. The

molly looked at him coldly.

"No," she growled. "That tom was a scourge to the forest, he deserves nothing but suffering." FatePaw's eyes grew wide as she revealed her glowing, blue pelt.

"You're BlueStar! And if you're BlueStar, then this is..." he trailed off, staring at the large tabby. "...TigerStar..."

BlueStar nodded. "I'm sure you've heard of the stories of how he died, both times. Are you confused about why he walks these lands?"

TigerStar let out a throaty growl,

"Don't you dare disrespect the great TigerStar!" He glared at FatePaw, "All descendants of mine should bow before my name, for I was a great-" his voice choked up, and he let out another screech of agony. FatePaw stared, paws frozen to the ground. TigerStar's blood clogged his paws.

"Why am I here?" He asked BlueStar shakily, who stared at TigerStar coldly.

"This is the afterlife for those who lost their way to the stars," BlueStar told him, her voice level. "Since TigerStar died as a spirit, he resides here, now. In constant suffering, a reminder of the way his blood was shed," her claws unsheathed, "and you're here for a reminder."

FatePaw forced his eyes shut, trying to drown out the screams of TigerStar with herbs. He ignored BlueStar's words. "Dock, mulberry, poppy..."

"FatePaw!" BlueStar snarled. FatePaw looked at her, the screams of TigerStar had dulled down to groans. "FatePaw, follow me. You need to see something,"

FatePaw walked forward, and let out a screech as a muddy paw grabbed his own. TigerStar glared at him, eyes narrowed to furious slits. FatePaw gagged as the warrior pulled himself up, his blood pooling out onto the ground below. He took a step forward, his eyes

alight with fury and agony, before he collapsed back to the ground. His paw let go,

"Don't leave me here!" He spat, thrashing. His eyes widened in horror as blood blocked his airway, and he spat the blood out. "FatePaw, come with me! You can be powerful, you can prove them all wrong!" His words ended in another screech of pain. FatePaw forced himself to walk forward, as the tabby warrior screeched and screamed and cursed at him.

He dragged himself towards BlueStar, ignoring the pain biting at his hind leg. BlueStar was sitting patiently, and she turned back.

"There you are! Come on, we don't have much time." FatePaw hurried to her side, and looked at the scene ahead of the two. A little tabby kit was running around, and FatePaw realized it must be TigerStar. He frowned, the den the tom seemed to be like his own den, with herbs and a pool, but it was built differently. Was this a different camp?

Little TigerKit squeaked. Another tom, an old gray one with wide, haunted blue eyes, was staring off into space. He looked down at the kit. FatePaw smiled, expecting the tom to regard the kit with kindness, but instead, the tom spat. His eyes narrowed and his mouth started to foam up.

"Get that monster away from me!" The tom screeched, his breathing becoming quicker. FatePaw stared, his eyes wide. BlueStar sighed from behind,

"TigerStar was always destined to be evil...and so is FallenPaw. You need to kill him, FatePaw," her voice was husky. Her vision clouded as if she had lost something.

"You can't expect me to kill my brother!" He spat, "I don't care if it's "destiny,", I won't follow that! What cat would give up their kin for-

"I gave up my kits to save the clan from ThistleClaw!" BlueStar snarled, her fur rising. "GooseFeather told me I'd burn like fire, but only water would end me, and it did!" Her tail lashed, "I gave up everything for my clan, and you should be able to do that too!" Her

eyes narrowed, "the safety of the clan is above all else, FatePaw!"

"The safety of our clan isn't up to you anymore," he growled, "I will follow my own destiny, I will not kill my own brother." His voice was cold. BlueStar growled,

"Do that, then," she muttered. Her voice rose, "but I warn you, it'll only end in pain. You've been warned, FatePaw." That's when screeches filled the clearing. Screams, wails, and hissing. BlueStar stood amongst the center, and her eyes glowed to a blue flame. FatePaw felt himself sinking into the ground below, and he let out a wail. He sank, down, down, down...

Then, FatePaw was awake.

BerryBush was staring at him, eyes wide.

"Thank StarClan you're awake!" they gasped. "I'm guessing you've had a vision. What did they tell you?" All of their concern for FatePaw had vanished.

"Nothing important," FatePaw lied, his head drooping. "I'm going back to camp," he glanced at his paw, expecting bite marks, but was surprised to see the wound was gone. BerryBush called after him, but FatePaw ignored her. As he entered camp, he went to his nest. He closed his eyes, and let sleep take him.

The only thing his dreams had were the terrible screams of TigerStar.

Chapter Eight

"What do you mean, 'he's going to the gathering?'" The angry voice of SandFur flew across the clearing. DewPaw dashed out, his eyes wide with alarm. What was SandFur angry about this time? His heart lurched as he saw SandFur facing OwlStar, his tail lashing. His hackles rose.

OwlStar returned the anger, his voice fierce and cold as he spoke. "You heard me. FallenPaw is going to the gathering! I don't care if some prophecy deemed him evil, he's going!" His lip curled. DewPaw watched OwlStar, his eyes narrowing. *You can say that, but I know a part of you doesn't trust him.*

It still made him angry when he thought of OwlStar asking him to "watch" FallenPaw, and keep him on the path of good. *I refuse too,* he thought furiously. The only bad thing about FallenPaw was his anger, and that wasn't even remotely evil! And... he was helping FallenPaw control that.

"Why should we trust him? His anger has been getting worse! What if some cat makes him upset and he starts a fight?" SandFur's voice rose, and his tail flew up. "Would that be good for the image of ThunderClan? No!" He started to pace, his claws digging into the ground below. Warriors crowded OwlStar and SandFur, leaping on their paws to watch the argument. OwlStar growled as warriors yowled in support of SandFur.

"I can't believe it!" FallenPaw growled, pacing beside DewPaw. "He's trying to have me miss the gathering again!" Anger burned in his gaze, and for once, DewPaw didn't have a protest against it. He was angry, too. He bristled; how dare SandFur yowl such words about FallenPaw?

"That's enough, SandFur!" OwlStar yowled. His voice rose to an angry screech, something wild starting to glitter in his gaze. DewPaw gasped. OwlStar got angry, but he had never gotten this angry. Silence filled the clearing. Foam dripped from OwlStar's

muzzle, and for a moment, his eyes seemed to glaze over. He then started to pace, his claws digging into the ground.

A moment later, the normal look went into his gaze again. He looked alarmed for a moment, before shaking his muzzle and breathing in. "I've made my choice," he growled coldly. "And you need to respect that,"

SandFur stared at OwlStar for a moment, before rolling his eyes and stalking away. "Yeah, whatever." GooseEye watched the tan warrior stalk away, and a growl rumbled in his throat. He stood forward, meeting OwlStar's gaze.

"I used to respect you, OwlStar," the warrior growled. His mew faltered for a moment, and he looked down. "My brother cared for you, so did I." His eyes narrowed, but his tail dropped in grief. Shudders passed through his fur, "My brother raised you, and then he died!" His voice rose. "He died in a storm, because of a prophecy dooming FallenPaw's treachery!"

OwlStar stared back, his gaze numb. Warriors and apprentices watched. Some heads bowed at the mention of StoneStar. DewPaw noticed his mother, BriarDust, dipping her head. She closed her eyes mournfully. DewPaw wished he could run over to her and press his nose into her fur, but something held him back.

GooseEye drew in a shuddering breath, "I lost my brother that day... and you choose to ignore the vision that came with that death," anger rose in his voice, again. "You've betrayed StoneStar, Owl*Heart,*" he growled. Warriors gasped. No warrior *ever* called a leader the wrong name! DewPaw turned towards OwlStar, waiting for the leader to snarl, but instead, the leader gave a defeated sigh. His tail drooping, he headed to his den without a word.

"Yes! Go hide in your den like a coward!" SwiftClaw sneered, and warriors taunted agreement. FallenPaw stared. ThrushFur's eyes narrowed at the taunting, BriarDust avoided the gaze of warriors. FallenPaw suddenly flinched, looking up in shock. Pain filled his gaze. DewPaw followed his friend's gaze and saw FallenPaw staring at FinShadow, who was yowling in agreement.

"I lost my precious mate!" FinShadow growled, raising his tail as warriors yowled for support. He puffed out his chest. "The threat needs to be controlled and eliminated!" Yowls of shock came from a few warriors.

"He's your son!" YewFur yowled. FinShadow looked away, and DewPaw was sure he saw a bit of sorrow in the gaze of FinShadow. Then he stared back at her,

"Sometimes, sacrifices need to be made," he mewed desolately. FallenPaw stepped up, his voice starting to shake.

"Because of a prophecy?" His voice trembled. "I'm your son, yet you treat me like I've already betrayed the clan," his voice grew level, as a painful understanding filled his gaze. "You'll never trust me, will you?" He leveled his eyes with FinShadow. FinShadow narrowed his eyes, before flinching and stalking away. FallenPaw started to back away, and then he dashed out of camp.

DewPaw gasped, and chased after him, wishing he could call his friend's name. *FallenPaw! H*e quickened his pace, heaving, and caught up to FallenPaw. His friend was breathing, eyes hollow. Tears started to drip down his face, tear by tear. He dug his claws into the ground and then yowled in the sky.

"Why, DewPaw?" FallenPaw asked hoarsely, turning to look at his friend. "Why can't my father trust me? All because of a prophecy!" He dug his claws into the dirt. "So many warriors want me dead... so many warriors hate me!" His ears flat, "ThrushFur is upset, everyone is mad at me and my father hates me. Everything has gone wrong..."

It was moments like this, that DewPaw wished he could speak. Comfort his friend. But all he could do was nod sadly. FallenPaw stared at the ground, making DewPaw's heart ache. It stooped so low that DewPaw was afraid it'd sink into the ground below and tear him open. Little drops of water started to sprinkle from the sky, and soon enough rain was pouring down.

FallenPaw was silent, standing unblinking as the rain brought his fluffy fur plastered to his sides. Mud soaked his paws and tail.

DewPaw hesitated, before getting to his paws and walking over to FallenPaw. He pressed his muzzle into FallenPaw's shoulder and gave it a gentle lick. Wrapping his tail around FallenPaw's, he purred quietly.

He looked FallenPaw in the eyes, widening his pupils. He slowly blinked once. FallenPaw stared at him for a moment, before blinking as well. His tail rose a bit as the two stood in place, side by side. They stayed like this, for a while, as the rain pelted down on them.

I promised I'd protect you, always. He thought. *And I've kept that promise...but because I care for you...it's not because OwlStar wants me to steer you towards goodness.* He thought. Because... FallenPaw... was good. He always patrolled and hunted for the clan, he always attended meetings. He had never shown a shred of disloyalty, despite his anger issues. If only more warriors could see that...

"We are leaving for the gathering!" OwlStar announced. DewPaw rose to his paws and followed FallenPaw to the group of cats heading towards the gathering. FallenPaw and DewPaw drew to the back, staying as far away from FinShadow as possible.

"Hey guys, wait up for me!" FatePaw dashed over to the two, his eyes bright with excitement. DewPaw remembered this was their first gathering; he and FallenPaw were bound to be excited. DewPaw waved a tail in greeting, and FallenPaw dipped his head.

"Are you excited about the gathering?" FallenPaw asked his brother, his tail swaying back and forth in excitement. *I guess he and FallenPaw fixed their argument...* he thought. *Or, at least, they're too excited to think about that.* DewPaw hoped it was the first. He didn't know what he'd do if he got in an argument with his sibling; if he had any, that was.

FatePaw bounced on his paws, "Yes!" he purred, "I'm so excited! I'll be able to meet apprentices from other clans!" The three walked ahead. FallenPaw sighed,

"I wonder what they'll think of me," his eyes grew wistful, "I hope they accept me for who I am," DewPaw nodded, resting a tail on

FallenPaw's shoulder. Soon enough, they reached the log. DewPaw crouched down and leaped on the log. He pulled himself up with ease, and he slowly walked across it, his heart racing.

FatePaw was the next to leap. DewPaw turned back to watch the tom leap up. He leaped, and then let out a screech as he landed on his side. He started to slip towards the edge and clawed at the wood. DewPaw leaped forward and pulled FatePaw up to safety. FatePaw breathed in relief, before thanking DewPaw. FallenPaw leaped with ease, and the three of them walked to the other side.

"Oh, wow..." FatePaw breathed out. He sounded a bit anxious. "There sure are a lot of cats here..." He whispered, looking at all the clans, gathered. FallenPaw was the complete opposite. He was looking around excitedly, a wide grin across his face.

"This looks amazing!" He gasped, "FatePaw, DewPaw, come on!" DewPaw followed suit, but FatePaw held back. He swallowed nervously,

"Uh, I think I'll stay with BerryBush," he mewed. "See you later," after that, he quickly ran to the side of BerryBush. DewPaw and FallenPaw shared glances, before shrugging. FallenPaw ran forward without a word, and DewPaw gave chase. He purred, and FallenPaw was more excited than a warrior becoming deputy!

Suddenly, FallenPaw stopped. DewPaw skidded, forcing himself to stop before he crashed into his friend. He looked up and saw FallenPaw staring in awe at a warrior in front of him. DewPaw's eyes widened, it was AceStrike! AceStrike was a reddish tabby tom with cream-colored ear tips, chest and tail. He had darker stripes and eye markings. No wonder FallenPaw was in awe; The red tabby was one of the tallest warriors in all of the clans.

"Hello DewPaw," AceStrike mewed, dipping his head. His orange eyes had a playful and humorous look to them. "Who's your little friend? Some cat needs to let him know that I have *not* grown wings," he raised an eyebrow, "although, the way he's looking at me, have I? Let's look," he jokingly turned around, before letting out a purr and looking at FallenPaw.

"Erm, I'm F-FallenPaw," FallenPaw stammered, his tail curling. He still looked at the tom in wonder, "Will I ever grow this tall?"

"You may," AceStrike mewed, "considering I was your height at my age, it's likely... but, I've heard of you." He blunk sadly, "I'm sorry about the way your clan judges you,"

FallenPaw looked surprised, and mewed, "You support me? I would've thought you'd run away after knowing I'm the dangerous traitor FallenPaw," he looked away. AceStrike shook his head,

"If StarClan told you to leap into the river, would you?" AceStrike asked.

"Well, no," FallenPaw mewed,

AceStrike nodded, "If the Clans don't allow cats to judge each other based on their own actions, then... we shouldn't try to force them to make judgments based on the words of the stars," he mewed, "if the cats are able to judge their clanmates that quickly, then are they really warriors?" FallenPaw blinked.

"Wow...you're...really wise," he gasped. "How do you know so much? You can't be older than 14 moons!" He added. AceStrike sighed,

"You could say I've had a bad life," he shrugged, "I've been forced to learn these due to unfortunate things in my life," he brightened, "but, it's better now, and I've learned so much," his eyes shadowed, "anyways, the gathering is too start. We should sit,"

DewPaw sat down by FallenPaw and AceStrike. He purred when FallenPaw kept glancing at AceStrike, eyes wide and admiring. OwlStar yowled for the gathering to start.

"I will speak first," he mewed. The cats fell silent. "First off, we have a new warrior, MilkFeather!"

"MilkFeather, MilkFeather!" The cats cheered. MilkFeather puffed her chest out, beaming. A grin crossed her face as a few warriors gave admiring mews. Once the cheering calmed down, MilkFeather sat down, looking at her paws happily.

"Recently, a loner has joined us," OwlStar mewed. Howls of rage filled the clearing. ThrushFur looked up, her gaze angry, while other warriors stood protectively around Atticus. FallenPaw ran over to stand in front of Atticus.

OwlStar growled. "Silence!" He yowled, his voice traveling over the cries and howls of protest. "Recently, a loner named Atticus-

AceStrike leaped to his paws, his eyes wide and alarmed. Fury filled his eyes, and his claws had dug into the dirt below. "No!" He yowled, voice trembling "Atticus should have never been let in. Atticus is a traitor and a danger to us all!"

"No, he is not!" FallenPaw screeched, his ears flattened. "Atticus is a noble warrior now, what he did in the past doesn't matter!"

Cats started to yowl and hiss at each other, hissing support or not. Claws flashed, teeth bared. SandFur leaped to his paws, claws unsheathed, and leaped at FallenPaw. FallenPaw snarled and unsheathed his claws. More cats crouched down, and then, battle exploded, hisses and yowls filling the clearing.

Chapter Nine

SandFur bowled FallenPaw over with a screech of rage. *He's attacking me! Letting* out a shocked yowl, eyes wide. How dare SandFur attack him? Because he had defended Atticus? Atticus stared with wide eyes and then was tackled down by GooseEye.

GooseEye managed to pin Atticus down, snarling. His ears flattened on his head and he spat a threat. Atticus yowled and kicked upwards, dashing to another attacker.

Struggling under the strong hold-down of SandFur, FallenPaw tried to shove the warrior off. SandFur sneered and shoved him down again, into the kit. Hear racing, FallenPaw let himself fall limp. SandFur loosened, and FallenPaw kicked his hind-legs upwards. SandFur flew off with a hiss, hitting the ground with a loud thump. SandFur lay in shock for a moment, before shaking himself.

He leaped to his paws and pelted toward FallenPaw with a hiss. He rested up his paw and slashed it across FallenPaws cheek. FallenPaw blinked blood out of his eye. Great StarClan, SandFur was strong! He saw SandFur crouching down, lifting his right paw up. FallenPaw screeched, and leaped forward, grabbing SandFur's paw in his muzzle. Warm, sticky blood dripped down his face.

Something roared inside of FallenPaw, and he violently ripped SandFur's paw forward. SandFur wailed. FallenPaw's claws dug into SandFur's face. FallenPaw's eyes narrowed into fierce anger. SandFur deserved this... SandFur had dared attack him! "FallenPaw, stop! You'll twist my paw!" SandFur screeched, his voice pleading. FallenPaw stared down at him coldly. He knew that if he wanted to, he could twist his head and twist SandFur's paw, forever. He could make him hurt for the treachery he had shown towards him and DewPaw...

And then, he realized, he really didn't want to. He spat out SandFur's paw. SandFur shook his paw, looking relieved. He spat at SandFur,

"You're lucky I'm a *loyal* clanmate, or I might've twisted your paw," he warned, his claws sheathing. He stood strong, and tall, while SandFur crouched down. SandFur lowered his eyes. FallenPaw bared his teeth before turning away to aid another clanmate.

Claws dug into his back. FallenPaw screeched, being thrown to the ground. SandFur had him pinned down, and his eyes were narrowed. The weakness had been a trick, so SandFur could ambush him from behind!

"I'll be the hero!" SandFur yowled, looking up into the sky. "I'll save the clan from you, once and for all! If FatePaw can't do it, then *I* will!" Pride filled his eyes, and FallenPaw could tell... SandFur really thought he was saving the clan. Because FallenPaw's whole life, SandFur had hissed and spat about how FallenPaw would destroy the clan...

It started to rain. The rain poured almost instantly, drenching the gathering and the cats. A few cats wailed as clouds covered the moon, but the fighting went on/ Beads of water pelted off SandFur onto FallenPaw. As SandFur shoved him more, mud started to stick in FallenPaw's fur.

FallenPaw twisted around, his face and legs pressing into the muddy dirt below. He reared his spine upwards, and the pressure was off of him. He spat out dirt. GooseEye was still fighting Atticus, who looked furious and frightened at the same time.

"I don't want to fight you!" Atticus yowled. GooseEye shoved Atticus in the dirt, shoving his muzzle towards Atticus. He breathed,

"If AceStrike says you're a danger, then it must be true! You've been betraying us- he was cut off as Atticus threw him off, glaring at GooseEye,

"I've done nothing! Give me a chance!" He pleaded. GooseEye hesitated. FallenPaw wondered if GooseEye was considering the loner's word. He sagged in relief as GooseEye backed away from Atticus, and ran. He turned back to SandFur, tail lashing.

"I didn't want to fight you," FallenPaw hissed. "You're my clanmate.

But now it looks like I'll have to," his claws unsheathed as he drew closer to his clanmate, tailing lashing. SandFur would not win this fight. Anger flamed inside of him. SandFur looked up at FallenPaw, baring his teeth. He leaped at FallenPaw again, crying out a battle cry. Claws struck his ear.

Blood slowly dripped down FallenPaw's ear, and pain exploded in it as well. FallenPaw froze, and time seemed to slow. A pained yowl erupted from some cat, and FallenPaw realized it was his own. The wind roared in his ears. SandFur looked at his paw and started to lick the blood off. With horror, he realized SandFur was *glad.* FallenPaw stared ahead, before leaping forward, getting back into the heat of battle. The pain was driving him insane. He lunged at SandFur, but something grabbed his tail and dragged him back. He thrashed, digging his claws into the dirt

It was GooseEye! He hadn't spared Atticus, he had seen an easier target! FallenPaw screeched, trying to claw the warrior away. SandFur growled and leapt at FallenPaw from the front, as GooseEye pinned him down. *StarClan save me!* His muzzle was roughly shoved in the dirt by GooseEye's muscular paws. Atticus' blood had stained the grey and brown warrior. SandFur swiped his claws across FallenPaw's flank, before circling the apprentice. A crow screeched.

Thunder struck. SandFur paced, his tail swaying, as he glared at FallenPaw. "You'll be in StarClan soon enough," he growled, "Or... The Place Of No Stars. A traitor like you deserves to rot there," he spat on FallenPaw. FallenPaw glared through his reddened vision,

"I was never a traitor!" He spat. All he had done was hunt and prove himself, over and over again. "I've shown nothing but loyalty to this clan, SandFur! Plus, if you trust in the prophecy so much, doesn't FatePaw have to kill me?" GooseEye drew back, his eyes wide with horror.

"You're right!" He gasped. He raised his muzzle, his claws sheathing. "If anyone is to kill you, it's FatePaw! That's what the prophecy said, and I intend to honor my brothers by keeping it that way," his claws sheathed. He turned to look at SandFur, his eyes calm. "SandFur," he rumbled, "Let FallenPaw go,"

SandFur growled, his fur rising. FallenPaw was surprised by his fierceness. He yowled, his voice louder than a windstorm across the moor. "No!" He snarled, "I don't care how the prophecy should be, I intend to save the clan now!" He pressed his claws into FallenPaw's neck, "No matter what I have to do," FallenPaw's breath caught in his throat as he lost the source of air. Thorns pressed his airway.

FallenPaw twitched, fear racing his pelt. He swore he could already see the stars... was his life going to end at the claws of his own clanmate? Blackness edged his vision. He thought of his life; it hadn't been that exciting. Hated his whole life, thrown astray...and only nine moons old. Near death, many times. So young... He couldn't die now! And... What about DewPaw?

DewPaw had always been by FallenPaw's side, vowing to protect him and be with him always, just as FallenPaw had done for him. DewPaw had helped his anger, too. DewPaw was funny, smart, and just... amazing overall. He didn't want to leave DewPaw. The thought of leaving his friend made his heart ache; would DewPaw be able to train alone? Sleep in a cold nest, alone? And FatePaw...

Suddenly, the weight of SandFur was ripped off of him. FallenPaw gasped for air, heaving himself to his paws. GooseEye had torn the warrior off with a snarl and was now standing over SandFur. His eyes were narrowed, and he looked up at FallenPaw,

"Consider this a favor, kit," He grunted, as he shoved the warrior back down. There was a toughness in the warrior's gaze, but behind it, FallenPaw thought he saw...guilt? Was GooseEye starting to realize that judging FallenPaw was wrong? He stared at GooseEye for a moment... could he really? Hope stirred in him... if GooseEye could, would others follow his paw steps?

Suddenly, the light flashed out of GooseEye's eyes. Claws had surrounded his neck and had torn it open. GooseEye's eyes grew wide. He let out a screech, but blood bubbled from his mouth. SandFur leaped up, looking shocked as blood splattered his pelt. He scrambled to his feet. FallenPaw tried to see who the attacker had been, but as fast as they had attacked, they had vanished.

DewPaw pelted after the attacker, eyes narrowed. FallenPaw was

sure he was faster than the swiftest WindClan warrior. He turned back to GooseEye. GooseEye was staring at FallenPaw, his eyes wide with horror. He glanced down at his paws as blood started to pool out of his neck, staining the dirt a rosy red. The warrior was dying. FallenPaw let out a strangled cry, his ears flattening on his head. SandFur let out a wail.

"GooseEye!" FallenPaw screeched, eyes wide.

GooseEye crumbled to the ground. FallenPaw ran over to the tom, his eyes wide and desperate. He pressed his ear to the tom's mouth and was relieved to hear breathing. GooseEye might make it, and prove to the others he was good! It was light, but still there. The breathing was harsh and quick.

The bitter, vile taste of blood hung in the air. SandFur shook GooseEye, his eyes wide with terror and grief. He had been GooseEye's best friend. He didn't seem to notice FallenPaw anymore. He crumbled down by GooseEye, nudging his pelt.

"GooseEye! Come on, get up!" SandFur gasped, nudging him again. GooseEye weakly looked up, before his head fell back into his pool of blood. SandFur shook his head, trying to help him up. Half his face was covered in the blood he had spilled, and his head drooped back down. SandFur looked up, glaring straight at FallenPaw, "This is your fault!" He snarled, rising to his paws. A fire burned in his eyes, "this-

"No," GooseEye choked out, spitting out blood. He weakly looked up at SandFur, his eyes sad. "No. It isn't his fault. We...we were *wrong* about FallenPaw," his eyes clouded a bit, and he reached towards the air like a kit, "StoneStar?" He whispered. He laughed joyfully, "StoneStar! It's been so long!" Was GooseEye seeing the spirit of the lost leader?

Panic filled SandFur's eyes. "No!" He wailed. "No! D-don't take him away from me, StoneStar!" SandFur screeched. "Don't! I can't lose him, not now!" He hung his head low, letting out a quiet moan of grief. His claws dig into the dirt.

Peace had filled GooseEye's gaze. He looked joyful, something

FallenPaw hadn't seen in GooseEye for a long time. His paw seemed to interlock with a cat unseen by the living. He opened his mouth, and whispered,

"I can finally join you in the stars brother... stay strong, FallenPaw," then, his eyes clouded over. His breathing had stopped, and his head fell into the dirt, lifeless. FallenPaw could already detect the vile smell of death rising off the warrior's fur. FallenPaw looked up. All the cats had stopped fighting; they were looking at GooseEye in sorrow. He had been a respected warrior. SandFur shook him, before yowling into the sky.

"No! My kit!" PoolWish wailed, running her frail body towards GooseEye. The brown she-cat slowed down. "My poor kit!" She fell down by her son's side and let out a low groan of grief. She sniffed the wound and stiffened. She looked up at BerryBush and FatePaw. "Don't just stand there! Help him! Heal him!" She snarled. She looked fiercer than a LionClan warrior.

FatePaw stared at his paws. His fur was soaked to the bone and he was shaking. BerryBush nudged him forward, and FatePaw shakily walked over to GooseEye's corpse. FallenPaw held his breath- could the warrior possibly be alive? FatePaws head bowed. He shook his head and used his paw to close GooseEye's eyes.

"He's gone," FatePaw whispered. His voice caught in his throat, "I'm so sorry..." he was shivering. Was it because of the rain, or because of grief? Gritty mud was lodged between FallenPaw's paws and the sticky substance of blood. PoolWish's eyes grew wide,

"No!" She screamed, "No, you- you coward! Just heal him!" Her claws were unsheathed. She lunged forward towards FatePaw. FatePaw stared at her, unflinching. He bowed his head. OwlStar and FallenPaw lunged forward. FallenPaw grabbed one shoulder of PoolWish and dragged her backward, away from FatePaw. She spat and hissed.

FallenPaw tightened his grip, ignoring the flash of claws across his shoulder as PoolWish thrashed, trying to get out of their grip. OwlStar looked at PoolWish,

"PoolWish, he was already gone by the time FatePaw arrived. GooseEye wouldn't want this," He mewed. PoolWish thrashed a moment later, before falling limp in defeat. FallenPaw her go, and she slid into the mud, whispering to herself.

"My kits... my dear kits are gone..." her voice shook. "I nursed them... I never thought I'd have to bury them," she buried her head in her paws and just lay there, in shock and grief. FallenPaw watched PoolWish sadly; A mother should never have to lose all of her kits before she joined the stars herself. PoolWish was truly alone.

Atticus was staring at GooseEye, his ears flat, eyes wide with shock. He ran over to FallenPaw, fur plastered to his sides.

"What happened?" He gasped, looking at GooseEye. FallenPaw explained the situation. Atticus listened, his face growing pale with shock. "But the warrior code!" He gasped, "A warrior is never meant to kill in battle!" DewPaw appeared, his ears flat. He looked at Atticus.

"Did you find the attacker?" FallenPaw asked him. DewPaw shook his head, tail drooping. Underneath his sorrow was anger. OwlStar rose his voice,

"StarClan is angry!" He yowled. Cats of all clans looked up, hissing in agreement. A few cats wailed in terror, looking at the clouded sky in terror. "We must return to our clans. The gathering is over," he mewed. FallenPaw was aware of a fierce glare on him- he turned around to see AceStrike looking at him in anger.

"You can't trust that tom," AceStrike growled, "He's a danger to everyone. I know more than you do, kit," his voice shook a bit as if the older warrior was in grief. *For who?* His ears flattened on his head and snarled,

"You can't tell me what to do! Atticus is my friend, he'd never do anything terrible!" He growled, "This fight was pointless! There was no need for this wasted battle, and now a warrior is dead," he growled,

AceStrike's eyes narrowed, "I never said a fight was needed," he mewed, "But if a battle breaks out, I do not hesitate to fight for my clan and my friends," he lifted his muzzle. FallenPaw gasped as a long scar- from his eye, down to his stomach, was revealed in the light. It tore at his fur.

"W-what," his eyes grew wide, "What happened?" He whispered. AceStrike looked away, his gaze shadowed. "You don't need to know that..." his eyes grew distant, "go with your clan,"

FallenPaw saw SongWish lifting GooseEye up, her tail dragging in the dirt below. SandFur reached forward to help, but SongWish snarled and lashed a paw at him. SandFur drew back, looking alarmed, before slowing his pace and walking behind the mother. His head hung low in grief, and shudders ran through his pelt.

FatePaw was still frozen to the spot, his eyes alight with guilt. It danced in his eyes, and warriors shoved past him. FallenPaw frowned and ran up to him. FatePaw turned to stare at him.

"This is my fault," he whispered, his voice numb. "If I had been quicker, I could've helped him..." his voice trailed off. He breathed in shakily, staring at the body of GooseEye as it was carried away. FallenPaw sighed,

"FatePaw, it isn't your fault," he sighed. FatePaw's ears flattened,

"Yeah, sure," FatePaw muttered. He shoved past FallenPaw and walked away. FallenPaw stared and watched him leave, and was suddenly aware of the pain slicing his ear. Everything in his right ear was muffled and silent. Blood dripped down his face.

FallenPaw saw DewPaw looking at him with worry, and then, he felt himself sinking to the floor. His eyes were closed, and when he opened them again, DewPaw crouched over him, panicked. Then, all was black.

Chapter Ten

He's dead.

Dead because of me.

FatePaw was stumbling clumsily through the hedge, not caring when thorns tore through his pelt. A fight had broken out, and now everyone was heading back towards camps. A fight because of Atticus, and the warriors who had grown so angry.

OwlStar had announced Atticus joining, and AceStrike had grown angry, yowling words of Atticus' danger too the clans. Warriors had yowled their support, and FallenPaw had snarled. FallenPaw had unsheathed his claws, and had leapt Infront of his friend to protect him from the angry words of warriors.

Then a fight had broken out. Cat's of all clans had fought, tooth and claw, until the dying scream of GooseEye had stopped them, as swiftly as a cloud to the moon. FatePaw couldn't help but feel that this was a sign from his warrior spirits. His uneasiness grew as he saw the shape of a cat in the clouds, with a flat, broad muzzle. He was sure it was YellowFang. A moment later, the shape of the cat looked away in disappointment, and then, it was a normal cloud again.

FatePaw lowered his head; the StarClan was angry. This had been a warning; blood never should've been shed, and a warrior had paid the price. FatePaw wondered if GooseEye was watching from above.

Cats seemed to surround him, all of them heading back to camp, like minnows upstream. They hadn't seemed to notice the cloud. His tail dragged in the dirt below. Rain was pouring down, soaking FatePaw. Pelt's brushed against FatePaw's, and he stared numbly ahead, eyes set onto the warrior that had been lost tonight. GooseEye had been slain by an unknown warrior, torn across the throat. He had died before FatePaw could've helped him.

Even in death, he looked young; his fur was smoothed, his paws small and soft. His claws dragged limply on the ground as PoolWish hauled herself towards camp. Her green eyes were dull with shock. FatePaw remembered her angry outburst. She had nearly attacked him, due to his failure of saving the lost warrior. She had already lost her other kit, StoneStar. Then she had lost another.

SandFur was behind PoolWish, his gaze numb with shock. He had scratches across his flank, and a bite mark on his paws. No cat spoke. Shudders shook through his pelt: he had been GooseEye's best friend. The two had always supported each other, and their opinions against FallenPaw. SandFur would miss GooseEye, FatePaw could tell.

Grief could turn a cat dangerous. FatePaw looked for wounded warriors. In a fight like what had happened, warriors were bound to be hurt. ThrushFur was licking her flank, where bits of fur had been torn off. She looked up, suddenly looking frightened, and dashed away. FatePaw frowned. What was that about?

MilkFeather was limping on her front paw, while MouseTail hung his head low, blood dripping down from a scratch across his eye. Every other cat had un-serious wounds. He'd need to check on MouseTail first, he decided. If he didn't, the wound could grow. They could lose another warrior. WeepingShadow was supporting MouseTail.

The clan entered camp. Warriors looked up, looking shocked at the sight of the dead warrior. Wail's filled the clearing. LavaBlaze dashed out, his eyes wide with horror.

The wind blew the reeds around them. The reeds seemed to whisper, whispering the words, *Farewell, warrior. Farewell.*

"What in StarClan happened?" The elder rasped. He had asked to stay at camp during this gathering due to a aching chest: FatePaw guessed he hadn't expected this to happen. His gaze fitted from warrior to warrior: he seemed to be accessing the damage, and the wounds of the warriors. His eye's fitted on the pelt of GooseEye and his tail drooped.

SandFur spoke up, "There was a fight," he growled, his voice low. FatePaw stiffened. The grief in SandFur's gaze had been replaced with a fierce anger. "Atticus is a threat. FallenPaw decided to start a fight by unsheathing his claws to "protect" that mangepelt," his eye's narrowed. "That apprentice caused the death of GooseEye." His claws dug into the earth as the sky screamed around them. "The prophecy is right!"

Snarls of rage filled the clearing. Warriors yowled, leaping to their paws, tails lashing. FatePaw crouched down, shocked by the amount of warriors supporting SandFurs word.

"A warrior is dead because of that traitor!" One hissed,

"The storm was a sign!" PoolWish wailed,

"All FallenPaw did was protect his friend! It's the warriors who started the fight!" YewClaw spat. Her fur ruffled.

No! FatePaw hung it head. It wasn't FallenPaw's fault: it was his. He had failed to heal the warrior.

FatePaw looked around for FallenPaw, for his reaction; he hadn't seen his brother, yet. Anxiety spiked his fur; what if his brother was wounded? FallenPaw had been the first one to be attacked, by the claws of SandFur himself. SandFur had seemed so angry... and FallenPaw was just nine moons. He had only seen a tear of claws before FinShadow had pulled him aside to scold him.

FatePaw stared as SandFur bowled over FallenPaw, his teeth bared. What was the sandy warrior thinking? FallenPaw was a clanmate! He knew SandFur disliked FallenPaw, but he never thought the warrior would attack him! No warrior dared attack a clanmate! Unless StarClan tells you so, according to my Clanmates...

The last thing FatePaw saw of his brother was a flail of paws before he was hidden by fighting warriors. Please be ok... *FatePaw thought, letting out a yowl of anguish. FallenPaw was an apprentice, SandFur a warrior. SandFur was broad-shouldered and strong, too. FallenPaw would be lucky to live.*

I have to get to him! Help him! *FatePaw started shoving himself through the crowd of fighting warriors. His heart raced- warriors thought with claws, not hearts. He was risking his life... part of him wanted to turn back and flee from the mass of warriors, but FatePaw forced himself to go on. Suddenly, claws snagged his pelt.*

FatePaw whipped around, his eyes wide. He couldn't make out who was dragging him backward, but amber eyes glared at him with rage. Great StarClan, who was attacking him? BerryBush had never shown him fighting moves, so he stood no chance against the attacking warrior. So, he dug his claws into the dirt, trying to stop the warrior from dragging him away.

It was to no use. There was a growl, and the claws only dug into his fur more. Jaws grasped his neck and threw him to the side. FatePaw reached out in the air in panic, before he hit the ground with a thud. He lay in shock, for a moment, before looking up in terror. FinShadow. He crouched down, bowing his head. FinShadow growled,

"Look what you've made SandFur do!" FinShadow snarled, his voice full of rage. "It was your responsibility to dispose of him, and you failed," *his voice was full of venom, and disappointment filled his tone. FatePaw looked down: his father had expected from him, and he had failed.* I'm sorry...

He wanted nothing but for his father to love him for he *was, not for what the stars destined him to be. Not what his paws had been laid out to do, not what StarClan tried to guide him to do. He wanted to be loved for* himself: *His loyalty, his humor, and his softness. His memorization of herbs.*

But all FinShadow saw him as was the son who was meant to end the life of his other sons, the life of FallenPaw. To him, FatePaw was nothing but a cat foreordained to end FallenPaw's life with the slice of a claw. To him, he was nothing but a savior to the clans. To most cats, being a savior seemed great. To be like the hero FireStar, or BristleFrost, was a dream only those worthy enough could receive.

But it felt more like a curse than a blessing. It felt like some cat controlled him as if the stars above had strings attached to his fate and his ways. His steps, his words, and the slash of his claws. Even his own

name showed that. He was nothing but a fate, a fate to kill the one who had been by his side.

He didn't want this fate.

"How dare you?" For once, he didn't cower. He lifted his head and stood tall, glaring into his father's eyes. "All you've ever cared about was that stupid prophecy," his voice was cold, as he stared up at his father with no remorse. FinShadow bared his teeth, but FatePaw held his ground. He wouldn't let FinShadow scare him anymore: how could a cat scared of the stars scare him? "I am sick of you deciding my destiny!"

FinShadow snarled, "I didn't choose it, StarClan did!" he spat, "StarClan, and the death of your mother is what chose it!" His voice rose. However, his eyes betrayed the fierce, painful darkness within FinShadow. The soul crushing darkness, shaping FinShadow into the cat he was today. Grief had pierced his gaze.

But that wasn't an excuse. Sadness was never an excuse for throwing your family away. No matter how much the branch was breaking, it was always meant to support the cat. FinShadow had failed. FatePaw bared his teeth,

"We could've been everything!" He spat. "We could've been a happy family, we could've been against those accusations! You could've been a good father!" His lip curled in disgust, his tail lashing, "but you let paint blind you! You're no father of mine," he spat, before turning away

After that, the dying yowl of GooseEye had traveled across the clearing, and cats had run to the scene. FatePaw had tried to help the warrior, and had *failed.* GooseEye was *dead,* because of his lack of herbs.

Suddenly, a screech filled the air. The snarling warriors fell silent, and turned towards the entrance. Even SandFur had the sense to shut up. PoolWish didn't look up: she had set her son on the ground, and was mourning her loss.

"BerryBush! FallenPaw needs attention *now!* He's losing a lot of blood!" The wail belonged to none other than the voice of ThrushFur, FallenPaws mentor. Her chest was heaving, blood

soaking her chest. She didn't seem to mind the wounds. That's when FatePaw realized why she had run; she must've realized her apprentice was gone.

DewPaw was beside the panic stricken warrior, his friend drooped over his back. His head hung low, FallenPaw's blood dripping down his pelt, turning the black fur a deep red. A moment later, the apprentice looked up, and his eyes seemed to burn holes through FatePaw. DewPaw was *mad.* He was glaring at SandFur, his claws unsheathed in the dirt. He looked like he'd attack the sandy warrior, if he could.

Had SandFur caused this? FatePaw ran over to ThrushFur and DewPaw, his eyes wide. DewPaw bent down, setting the apprentice down. His eyes scanning the apprentice, he let out a gasp of horror- FallenPaw's right ear was terribly torn, little bits of red, bloodied skin curling at the remaining, ragged edges. *Just like his ear in the vision!*

"BerryBush! His ear is badly torn, get cobwebs now, please! I can't do this alone!" FatePaw mewed quickly, his voice firm. He didn't *care* that he was bossing his mentor around: FallenPaw needed attention, now. He would die of blood loss, if he didn't receive the right treatment.

But BerryBush stood their ground, their muzzle rose. Their eyes had a look in them, a look that scared FatePaw. A look of cold certainness. This wouldn't be good.

"It's clear, StarClan sent this as a sign. FallenPaw is a danger: he must be left to die," they mewed, looking at FatePaw. They flicked their tail. "The only cat who stands between that is FatePaw; it's up to him to decide whether to leave FallenPaw, or not," a bit of peace filled BerryBush's gaze. FatePaw couldn't believe it. How could BerryBush be *glad* FallenPaw might die? They looked at FatePaw with a smile, "It's time you've fulfilled your destiny. Stand back, and let him die." They looked *proud.*

No.

He couldn't believe it! BerryBush was expecting him to let

FallenPaw... almost every cat was. Some leaned forward eagerly, others looked numb with relief, as if the clan had been saved from a doom. The doom they had caused. ThrushFur stared at him in fear, while DewPaw looked at him, as if saying, "it's up to you. But if you really are a hero, you'd save your brother." His eye is still burned with anger, standing over his friend.

"Let him die!" SandFur yowled. "He'll rot in the dark forest, where he belongs! ThunderClan will be *safe!"* Warriors yowled agreement, while others snarled protest. Tension hung in the air like a storm, threatening to break over like a dam. Like the rain a storm had brought.

The storm.

The storm had *never really ended*. Even if the rain had died away, even if the flood waters had left the lands of the clans, the storm, had never really ended. The storm was here, now, threatening to break the stability of the clan: and it was all because of a vision. Warriors growled, and flashed their claws.

The storm had never ended. FatePaw had made his decision.

"I will heal him, as I failed to do so with the warrior laid in the paws of the stars," he announced, his ears flattened. "Even if I have to do it alone. Don't you all realize what's really caused this destruction? This pain?" His gaze flashed to the body of GooseEye, and then back to the glares of his clanmates. They were all so *foolish. Those mousehearts never realized how much they've been hurting the clan!*

BerryBush looked away.

"But, it's for the good of the clan! FallenPaw has dragged us down," BerryBush whispered.

"No, we've let a *prophecy* drag us down! We've let the words of dead warriors guide us, guide us towards hate and disloyalty!" He spat the last word with spite. "Yes, *disloyalty*. The way you've treated FallenPaw has been disloyal." He then bent down, and picked up FallenPaw.

He dragged his brother to his den, ignoring the glares on his pelt. Ignoring the hisses, and the wails. The pleading, the groaned. Ignoring the rain pelting down his pelt, ignoring the yowls of OwlStar as he scolded them for their foolishness.

As he entered the den, and set FallenPaw down, a new emotion had finally exploded in FatePaw. *Anger.* Anger at the clanmates who had cast his brother aside for the words of the stars. It had always been there, hadn't it? That anger. It had been hidden for such a long time. Even from himself.

The clan... they were all *destined to the stars.* Clung to them like a kit to his mother. FatePaw vowed that from now on, he'd always protect his brother, no matter what he'd have to do to achieve that. Even if it meant losing the trust of those around him. FallenPaw *would* live, and he'd live a life of joy and honesty. He'd feel at home, just as every other warrior deserved.

He'd break the chains of the stars.

OH, MY GOD??

ITS RANKED #12 ON WARRIOR CATS TAGS OUT OF 31.9 K!

510 OUT OF 64K

THANK YOU SO MUCH! Your views and votes have made this possible

Chapter Eleven

"StarClan will abandon us!" The wail of PoolWish traveled over the camp as she lay at the body of GooseEye. She had never left his side as the warriors had argued. Even when SandFur had yowled and spat the blame, she had remained by his side. She stared at the medicine den, the den that DewPaw's friend, FatePaw, had dragged FallenPaw into to heal. Dread filled DewPaw. He looked at her, eyes wide; she really thought StarClan would leave the clans because of one apprentice. He could tell from the look in her eyes.

Wails clamored at the words PoolWish had declared. Ears flattened, and cats of all ages stared up at the cloudy sky, eyes bulging with terror. Rain poured off of foliage and leaves, and a loud grumble of thunder traveled across the air, causing a few warriors to flinch.

DewPaw couldn't believe it: they really *did* think StarClan was abandoning them! *Just because FallenPaw is being treated like a normal cat by his brother. Just because kin didn't kill kin. Blood didn't spill blood.*

DewPaw understood FatePaw: he could never imagine killing his mother, BriarDust, or his father, ThistleOak. Despite their differences, he never *could* kill the cats he called kin. Even if a warrior pressed their claws to his throat and threatened to kill him, if he didn't kill his family, he'd be in the stars.

With a pang, he remembered his brother, HopeKit. HopeKit had died due to sickness after three moons of being born, marking DewPaw a single kit. BriarDust had been distraught: DewPaw knew sometimes she wished it had been him, who died, instead of the joyful and calm HopeKit. If HopeKit had survived, DewPaw knew he would never do anything to hurt him, no matter what others told him to do!

FatePaw had every right to protect and heal his brother, despite what the stars told him otherwise. That's what DewPaw thought. The warriors of his clan failed to see that, they always had. They followed the words of the stars, and now, seemingly without them, they seemed to be falling apart. As if StarClan was the only thing that held the clans together, like a sap to the tree.

It made DewPaw furious. Warriors had always hissed at FallenPaw, even when he had been a kit, out of the nursey. The number of times ThrushFur had to coax FallenKit asleep was too much to even count. She had whispered sweet nothings to him, every night, until he had been in the world of dreams. DewKit had always watched, willing his friend to sleep.

And *SandFur*. SandFur had attacked FallenPaw, after holding his pent-up anger for moons. He had finally snapped and attacked his clanmate. Now, FallenPaw was badly wounded, and GooseEye was dead.

"FatePaw had decreed a challenge against StarClan!" FinShadow announced, rising to his paws. Fear strung in his gaze, and he lifted his muzzle, "We've lost a warrior due to the foolish *ignorance* of these two apprentices! *This* is what happens when young cats refuse to listen to the cats who have died bravely for the clan," warriors listened to the words of the warrior. DewPaw couldn't believe it! FinShadow was speaking nonsense!

FinShadow, FallenPaw's own *father*, had also treated FallenPaw badly for choices that weren't his own. Not only FallenPaw, but FatePaw, too. FinShadow held FatePaw to such high expectations that DewPaw wondered why FatePaw hadn't broken, yet.

He met the eyes of FinShadow.

You are vulnerable. You are weak. Grief has shaped you into a monster, hiding the true you away like a cage to a beast. You are imprisoned by your own thoughts and decisions, and one day, you will drown in the waters of your choices. You could've had a happy family, but with a monster you've morphed, there is no chance for you, now.

"SandFur is right!" PoolWish sprung to her paws, her eyes full of

bitter grief and sorrow. "I have lost more to this prophecy than any other cat has. My son, StoneStar died to the storm deeming the vision," for a moment her voice broke. She missed her kits... She drew in a shuddering breath, before saying, "And now GooseEye is dead, due to a fight that *FallenPaw* started. He let Atticus in, he was the one to agree to bring him to camp. If he hadn't let him in and hadn't unsheathed his claws, none of this would've happened!" Her voice rose to a screech.

As DewPaw stared into the eyes of PoolWish, he instantly knew how she felt: Her eyes, under the fierce anger, showed the sorrows of a mother, lost in grief. It was clear: she wanted a *purpose* for the loss of her dear kits. Without that, she'd feel like a failed mother, a mother who had failed to protect her kits from the cruel claws of death. Without her anger and grief, she was nothing but a vilomah.

Then, SandFur nodded in agreement. He rumbled, "Not only that, but *DewPaw* was the one who found FallenPaw! He's no better than those two: he's been clinging to FallenPaw like a kit!" His voice rose, and he turned to glare at DewPaw. DewPaw bristled, crouching down. How *dare* SandFur accuse him of *treachery!* He met SandFur's glare: nothing but anger and grief had beseeched his gaze. He had only helped his friend!

DewPaw turned to his mother, who had been hanging her head low as warriors had argued. He desperately willed her to look up and defend him, as she had done for FallenPaw, many times. He wanted to cry out her name, but mouth bound by birth, he just stared. She looked up, and alarm filled her gaze as she saw her son looking at her with hopefulness. He scanned her eyes. His heart sank.

Disappointment, and fear. Fear of speaking out, because to her, DewPaw was nothing but a useless kit putting himself in danger. Perhaps, if she didn't say anything, DewPaw would realize being a warrior apprentice was too difficult, and he'd retire, the clan's youngest elder. So he wouldn't die as HopeKit had.

She was wrong.

DewPaw looked around, his heart racing as warriors stared at

him, none daring to speak up. Finally, OwlStar leaped to his paws, his orange eyes narrowed with fierce anger. Out of all cats, why did OwlStar have to defend him? He looked down. He didn't owe OwlStar anything; even if the leader was about to defend him.

"All DewPaw did was help his friend!" OwlStar growled. His tail twitched with anger. "All FallenPaw has done is exist! All FatePaw has done is love his brother!" His voice rose. "No warrior will speak against the three youngsters over my watch," his voice grew cold. "And SandFur, how dare you attack one of my clanmates? Give me one good reason I shouldn't *exile* you,"

SandFur froze, his eyes growing wide. He even looked a little hurt. DewPaw nearly laughed with bitterness: he hadn't expected that, had he? SandFur spluttered,

"B-because I thought I was helping the clan! I won't do it again," he bowed his head low. OwlStar glared down at him, seeming to think. Then he scowled,

"Fine. But I've got my eye on you. We will now hold vigil. Those close to GooseEye may sit by him," his voice was cold. He hadn't even spoken the words to send GooseEye to the stars! OwlStar turned to look at DewPaw, and mewed, "You, lets chat,"

DewPaw hesitated, the last thing he wanted to do was talk to the leader who had been twisting FallenPaws trust in him. But, OwlStar was the clan leader: he couldn't just deny his leader's request, no matter how much he was against it. With a heavy sigh, he hauled himself into OwlStar's den.

OwlStar circled in his nest, before sitting down. He looked down at DewPaw with a taint of sadness and longing. DewPaw returned the gaze coldly. What could OwlStar possibly want? To watch FallenPaw again?

"DewPaw, I can't help but notice we've been distanced, ever since I requested the favor for you to keep an eye on your inmate," he murmured. He dropped his gaze. "You used to look up to me, but now you look at me as if I'm a monster," DewPaw felt a stab of guilt at the state of his leader. His tail drooped, and his eyes had a look

of such sorrow that DewPaw almost wanted to grow warm and look up to the leader again. But he *couldn't.*

DewPaw, looking down at his paws, knew what OwlStar said was true. He *had been* avoiding the leader: due to the leader's bias against FallenPaw. *But why is OwlStar so upset about that? I'm just a normal apprentice, it's a bit odd to think he wants a connection with me. Every kit looks up at OwlStar! Why should it be such a big deal if some kit loses that?* OwlStar went on, he had seemed to read DewPaws thoughts,

"I miss it because you are one the best apprentices we've had," OwlStar mewed. "Despite being mute, you haven't let that stop you, no matter what. You could great things. But if we're distant from each other... will you ever really be able to serve me? To not serve me is to not serve the clan," he reminded DewPaw. DewPaw flinched, stung by these words. Was OwlStar right?

Had OwlStar had huge plans for DewPaw? A bit of hope stirred in him: OwlStar thought he was *special*. Barely any cat thought he was special. Great things. He could do great things for his clan, for *OwlStar.*

OwlStar breathed in, and whispered, "And DewPaw? I'm sorry for judging FallenPaw so easily. I'm sorry for thinking he needed guidance to remain good. I see I was wrong," he leaned forward a bit, resting his tail on DewPaws shoulder. DewPaw shivered: OwlStar *did* think he was special! Was OwlStar really sorry for what he had done? Hope stirred in his chest: perhaps he *could* look back up at the leader, and be special!

He *could* be a warrior! He hesitated, before smiling up at OwlStar. *I forgive you. In reality... I don't think I was ever* really *upset.* The claws around DewPaws heart loosened, as for once, he could look at OwlStar with a sense of admiration and respect, and have the gaze returned to him. During the period he had been cold towards the noble clan leader, he had felt nothing but anger, but pain, as he had looked at the large tom. OwlStar purred,

"Run off now, okay? I'm sure your *friend* will be waking up soon," he flashed a wink at the word "friend", and DewPaw felt heat rush

up to his ears. OwlStar had clearly seen the connection between him and FallenPaw. DewPaw dipped his head with a nod and dashed out of the leader's den. He felt as if he was floating on his paws: OwlStar *respected* him. It was a shame he couldn't tell anyone.

The clearing had been nearly abandoned. Warriors had listened to the word of OwlStar, and had retreated to their dens to escape the rain. Only SandFur, PoolWish, and MilkFeather had remained out, by the corpse of GooseEye. Snores betrayed sleeping warriors, exhausted from the battle. As DewPaw walked towards the medicine den, MouseTail walked out, looking back,

"Thanks, BerryBush," the tom mewed, dipping his head at the healer. He turned to DewPaw and let out an amused purr, "Here to see FallenPaw, I suppose? Go right ahead, he'll want to see you," he teased, butting DewPaw in the shoulder before bounding off. DewPaw looked at his paws, flustered, before walking into the den.

FallenPaw looked up, his pain-filled eyes lighting up a bit. DewPaws heart broke and he dashed over to his friend, who looked terrible. FallenPaws ear was wrapped in cobweb, but it was obvious that the upper part of his ear would be forever torn and gone. He would never hear out of that ear again. Dried blood stained the edges of the cobwebs.

DewPaw settled down by him and started to lick his friend's ear, avoiding the cobwebs. He wanted to be sure not to hurt FallenPaw. He licked off the dirt and remaining blood. FallenPaw closed his eyes in relaxation, letting out a tired purr. DewPaw smiled softly, before looking at FallenPaw.

FallenPaw opened his eyes, and his gaze met DewPaws. He purred at DewPaw quietly,

"Hey DewPaw," he weakly whispered, his eyes alight with a warmness that made DewPaw melt on the inside. "Thank you for bringing me back to camp... I would've died of blood loss if you hadn't found me," his voice trembled a bit. DewPaw hushed FallenPaw with a tail over the mouth and nodded.

Why wouldn't he? FallenPaw was his friend: he'd do anything for

FallenPaw. Perhaps he was more than a friend, DewPaw realized. Whenever he thought of his friend, his fur tingled. He felt welcome around the tom and loved the apprentice for who he was. He was funny, brave, and... overall a great cat. FallenPaw always made DewPaw laugh and always made him feel... loved.

He wouldn't trade it for the world. FallenPaw turned to FatePaw, his eyes sad,

"Thank you too, FatePaw, for treating my wounds... without you and DewPaw, I would be lost,"

BerryBush looked away as if they'd been stung. *Because you refused to treat him!* He dug his claws in the dirt. FallenPaw blinked down at his claws, looking confused, and then looked back at BerryBush, hurt dawning in his gaze. It was at this moment, that FallenPaw was most likely realized that she had denied herbs for him.

"FallenPaw-" BerryBush started to say, their voice catching in their throat. DewPaw thought he saw fear in the gaze of BerryBush. She was nervous and didn't know what to say. FallenPaw looked down coldly,

"Save it," he muttered. "I already know, you wanted to leave me to die." He turned away, his gaze stormy. "I'm used to it by now. No need to hide it,"

DewPaw quickly dashed over to FallenPaw, looking into his eyes. As he peered into the eyes of the young apprentice, they started to close, the green fading into a misty lush green. DewPaw pressed himself closer and quickly read his gaze.

You are hurting, you are shocked. You feel vulnerable, and weak, because, in reality, you are only nine moons old. The anger has left you, it has been drained away by the refusal of the warriors meant to be called kin. You are betrayed, you are hurt.

You are losing hope.

Chapter Twelve

"FallenPaw," a loud, powerful, she-cat voice traveled through FallenPaw's ears. The voice was unrecognizable. FallenPaw wondered who this cat speaking to him could be. Was it a ThunderClan warrior? He lifted his nose and sniffed. It didn't smell of ThunderClan. In fact, it had no scent at all. He frowned- how did a cat have no scent?

But, why should he give a fox dung? It was most likely some cat ready to hiss at him. Hiss at him about the StarClan-forsaken prophecy. He looked up for a moment, catching a glimpse of black fur, before he let his head flop down into the soft grass below. His ears flicked.

Grass. Underneath his body was soft, lush grass, as if it wanted to wrap around him, and protect him forever. A slight breeze ruffled his fur, running through his ears like a rock to a river. It was peaceful... a little too peaceful. FallenPaw shot to his paws, his heart racing. His eyes shot open. His jaw gaped, as his ears flattened down, a little whimper escaping his throat.

Stars. Stars, and a sage green, lush, long grass. Stars hovered over the grass and made the green glow into a light baby blue. Trees lay upwards across the endless hills, and the sky was a deep blue, filled with more stars than FallenPaw had ever seen.

A warrior stood in front of him, her fur a deep black, with orange speckles across her back that looked like spots. She had these speckles across her face, too. He reached forward to tap her, but to his surprise, his paw went straight through her! He pressed himself to the ground, shock pulsing through his pelt.

"Am I in... StarClan?" He managed to choke out. No! He couldn't be in StarClan, not now! He closed his eyes, thinking of his friend, DewPaw. Had the apprentice dragged him back to camp for nothing? Had DewPaw fiercely defended him... for nothing? When he had been looking into my eyes, was that his way of saying goodbye? *His tail pressed low to the ground.* I never got to make amends with

ThrushFur...

"Yes," the warrior spoke. FallenPaw quickly looked away, his heart shattering to pieces. Swaying on his paws, he forced out a question. His breath caught in his throat, a wail held back. His voice trembled,

"So, I'm dead?" He couldn't be dead! What about his dreams of becoming a warrior? His warrior name? Would he forever be FallenPaw?

"No," the warrior spoke, a bit of an amused gleam glittering in her eyes. "How would a torn ear kill you, little apprentice? The worst a torn ear can do is scar... apprentices these days, thinking everything will kill them," she shook her head, letting out an amused snort.

FallenPaw let out a huff- he was only 9 moons old! He could've died of blood loss, and all this cat was doing was messing around. If she weren't a StarClan cat, he'd tell her she had bees for brains! He forced a polite smile and asked,

"Then...why am I here?" Was he being visited? If so, he hadn't known that StarClan warriors enjoyed teasing apprentices.

"I've been longing to see your fur...my dear son," she purred, padding closer to him. FallenPaw let his eyes grow wide, and he whipped his head up, breathing in her scent. As her sweet, milky scent filled his scent glands, he was suddenly back in a memory of him pressing up to the milk glands of a cold mother, mewling hungrily. He hadn't recognized death.

Could this really be his mother? The cat who had died, the cat who had signified the prophecy? His fate?

"Mother?" He wanted to surround himself with her scent forever. He shivered... this was the real mother he had lacked for so long. "...DewStream?" He had only heard her name in nursey tales- he had never expected to speak to her.

"Yes, FallenPaw," DewStream whispered, her gaze breaking into one of sorrow. "Come here, my beautiful kit," FallenPaw ran forward and pressed his muzzle into her fur, his purrs merging with hers. He pulled

away to look at her.

She looked young, her pelt rid of any scars, forever a beauty to the stars. Her fur was soft against his own. She had the sharp ears of FatePaw, and the green eyes of FallenPaw. Her fur was the same black hue as FatePaw, her paws as white as snow. FallenPaw stood on his toes to reach her nose. It was rough.

"Why haven't we spoken yet?" FallenPaw whispered, his eyes watering up. "I've missed you so much, even if I never met you.." was it possible to miss a mother you'd never met? A mother you'd lost at birth? DewStream purred,

"I've watched you and your brother... and I'm so sorry the clan has treated you this way," she mewed, "this is not what I thought would happen when I joined the stars..." her eyes grew distant. "FinShadow is no longer the cat I fell for..."

"You mean my father?" FallenPaw breathed, shifting his haunches. He wondered how DewStream could've fallen for him anyways- he was rude.

"Yes," DewStream responded, lifting her nose up in the air, "he was noble, and brave when I fell in love with him... after I picked him back up onto his paws," the warrior shifted her paws uncomfortably, and FallenPaw was sure he could see regret in her eyes. Did she regret this love?

"How did the two of you even start talking? All warriors can be brave and noble! Plus, all he is now is rude and mouse-brained," He scoffed, "is that really what you look for in a tom? I'd rather find a tom that's nice, loyal, and that you bond wit-

DewStream put her tail over his mouth, shutting him up. FallenPaw scowled.

"We were fresh warriors," DewStream mewed, ignoring the scorn in FallenPaws tone, "and he was in a dark place, grieving over the death of his best friend, BerryTail, due to a leaf-bare sickness; FinShadow and BerryTail were inseparable since birth,"

FallenPaw listened, his eyes focused on the stars above as she spoke. Was what she said true? It was pretty hard to imagine his cold, mournful father having a best friend- was there a time FinShadow was a happy, eager warrior? And BerryTail? I wonder if BerryBush is named after BerryTail...

And no wonder he'd been lost back then... FallenPaw guessed that whenever his father had lost kin, he had changed into a lesser cat...a cat who let grief overtake him... had he? He decided to ask.

He opened his mouth but shut it again when DewStream flashed him a stern look- one telling him he was not invited to speak. He sat down, muttering under his breath. Fine, I'll ask questions later!

DewStream went on, pools of sorrow and love pooling into her gaze. "He would barely speak to anyone- that was until the badger attack. FinShadow saved me- and then he realized, perhaps there was something to fight for," she purred. "He left for a wander, to think of his life, and I went with him... during this time, we fell in love," a soft smile crept up her face.

FallenPaw nearly gagged, thinking of his parents being all lovey-dovey, on a journey, leaping through meadow fields and climbing tall trees... his parents hadn't acted that lovesick, had they? He shuddered. Shaking himself out of his mind, he listened, holding his breath. That's when the voice of a molly entered the clearing,

"When my brother returned, I was expecting the kits of a loner," a tall, golden molly, entered the clearing. "I decided to name one of them BerryKit, in honor of BerryTail. That's when FinShadow fully healed," DewStream scoffed. FallenPaw wondered if she regretted naming a kit to make his father feel better about himself.

"Yes CrowEyes, now it's clear to me that he was dependent on love to be a good cat- I guess love can tear the heart of a cat to pieces- once he loses it," she drew her paw over her heart, unsheathing her claws and slashing the grass below, "As soon as he lost me, as soon as he lost the support he was clinging onto, he grew back to the cold version of himself, and has failed to see the love in front of him,"

"The beauty of his kits," CrowEyes whispered softly, walking up to

the side of DewStream, her eyes level. DewStream opened her jaws to speak, but before she could even muster a word out, her head flung to the side. Her eyes grew wide in alarm, the fur on her hackles, rising. FallenPaw froze, taken aback by her alarm, and was even more alarmed when DewStream quickly shoved him away,

"FallenPaw, wake up, now!" She gasped. FallenPaw shoved past her, trying to catch a glimpse of what had terrorized her. What he was last expecting was to see the glowing fur of another StarClan warrior, heading towards them, fast. Why was DewStream scared of StarClan? She was StarClan herself!

"Why?" FallenPaw sounded confused, tipping his head. DewStream shook her head, grabbing FallenPaw's paw.

"Just do!" She screeched. FallenPaw blinked- and when he opened his eyes, he was back in the medicine den.

"You're awake," it was FatePaw. His back was turned to FallenPaw, and he was sorting through some herbs. "I heard you gasp, nightmare?"

FallenPaw shook his head- and then remembered FatePaw was turned away from him, so he quickly mewed, "No, just spooked, that's all." It wasn't a lie...right? FatePaw sighed,

"You've been out for a while, now. The vigil for GooseEye has started... are you going to go?" He was staring at FallenPaw now, his gaze betraying nothing. He stared back. Underneath the expressionless gaze was a tormenting guilt- a guilt that seemed to be dragging FatePaw down by thorns, drowning him in the waters of his own mind.

GooseEye. GooseEyes vigil.

FallenPaw hesitated- should he? The tom had tormented him for moons... but, he had been thinking it was for the right, broken by the loss of his brothers in the storm. "I think I'll listen to what his kin has to say about him. He was noble," FatePaw nodded approval, looking a bit relieved. Was he glad FallenPaw wasn't holding a grudge?

"Let us get going, then," he mewed. "DewPaw stayed here awhile, but I told him to comfort his mentor. He'll be glad to know you're awake, though?" FallenPaw smiled lightly at the thought of his friend: DewPaw was a great friend. As he dragged himself out, following the treading steps of FatePaw, he glanced at the center of camp.

Few warriors sat by the corpse of GooseEye. SandFur, his friend, PoolWish, LavaBlaze, his parents, and YewClaw, his sister. DewPaw sat beside YewClaw, pressing his nose into her fur. YewClaw was staring at GooseEye, her eyes numb. LavaBlaze looked up to see FallenPaw and FatePaw and shuffled over so they could sit by the fallen warrior.

"Despite our differences, GooseEye was the only sibling I had left, after the storm," she nuzzled his fur. "He would always think of creative games to cheer me up when I was sad- and he led his life loyal to his kin. He owed up to his mistakes at the end of his life... all he ever wanted to do was avenge our lost kin," she bowed her head.

How would I react, if I lost FatePaw to a prophecy, and then the cats failed to listen to it? It'd feel like it'd be a waste, wouldn't it? He couldn't imagine losing his brother... but he knew he'd never act the way GooseEye had. But a part of him understood.

"I lost my son, StoneStar, in the storm," PoolWish rasped out, "so I cherished GooseEye and YewClaw more than before. I never thought I'd lose another kit so soon... GooseEye was brave, and stood up to something many cats failed to see," for once when she turned to stare at FallenPaw, FallenPaw didn't flinch. "May we mourn his life forever..."

The cats settled down. DewPaw nudged FallenPaws to flank with his tail as FatePaw padded away. FallenPaw followed his friend into the apprentice den, taking in the warmth as they entered.

"DewPaw?" FallenPaw whispered, looking at his friend. DewPaw nodded. FallenPaw sighed,

"I don't know what to think about the loss of GooseEye. On one

paw, he always treated me like an outcast...but on the other... he was under the belief that he was avenging StoneStar... he accounted for what he did wrong," FallenPaw looked down. "A part of me has always been bitter over GooseEye- but I think I'm able to let that go... is that... normal?"

DewPaw nodded. He rose to his paws and beckoned FallenPaw to follow him. The two young toms padded out of camp until they reached the stone pond. DewPaw exchanged a fond glance with FallenPaw. He bent down and grabbed a stone in his jaws. He gave it to FallenPaw, and pointed toward the stream they had previously laid a rock down for when he had managed his anger.

FallenPaw walked forward, and he slowly put the rock down beside the other, making sure one didn't knock the other down. He turned to look at DewPaw, who had smiled softly. DewPaw headed over to him, and to FallenPaw's surprise, he shoved his head underneath the chin of FallenPaws, purring quietly, in a way of comfort and pride.

FallenPaw closed his eyes, letting his emotions- and his grief- over GooseEye pour out. He purred quietly as well, until the purrs of his own and DewPaw's matched. He intertwined his tail with that of his friends, as water dripped around the open cavern around him.

Perhaps things really were getting better... perhaps FallenPaw would be able to prove himself to the clan.

Chapter Thirteen

"Can you fetch some catmint for me?" BerryBush asked worriedly as they urgently sorted through some dock leaves, tail flicking. FatePaw, feeling a sense of bitterness and weariness, sat slouched in his nest, his head in his paws. He hauled himself to his paws at the sound of his mentor's urgent tone.

"Of course, BerryBush," he mewed, his voice nonchalant. Deep down, he always wondered... Why should he bother being *excited* over gathering herbs? It wasn't like the clan would see past the bounds of the words of the stars. They had never seen past the prophecy, and never had, always focusing merely on the words of the stars. They would never praise him for being a good medicine cat, anyways. All they had ever cared about was the prophecy. To FatePaw, the way the clan acted, and the words of the prophecy were mouse brained, to him. *If you ask me, it's all a load of fox dung. All I'll ever be seen as is the clan hero. In the eyes of the warriors, all I'll ever be is a hero.*

BerryBush, clearly ticked off at FatePaw's anger, merely rolled their eyes, "Are you really still sour about the prophecy?"

"Yes! Must we always be bound, and controlled, by the will of StarClan? I'm sick of being the cat to carry the sick burden of being "special", I'm sick of being destined to be the one to end the life of a "villainous rogue" that you've all carved out for him to be!" His tail lashed with a mix of anger, defiance, and tiredness.

BerryBush couldn't control the laugh that bubbled from their mouth, full of bitterness and pain. She curled her lip,

"You should feel *fortunate*, FatePaw, not many cats get to enjoy that kind of life. The life of a savior!" They chided, cuffing FatePaw playfully around the ear. FatePaw felt his anger rising, his glare intensifying as BerryBush seemed to dismiss his words.

Hackles rising, he spat, "Well, I don't! I don't feel fortunate at all!" His fur itched at the sound of BerryBush's angry, yet dismissive, tone. How *dare* they act like a prophecy foreseeing the death of his *brother* was some great reward? *They don't understand!* Ever since the death of GooseEye, bitterness had consumed BerryBush into an angry fit of stars and words, and FatePaw knew it originated from the fact that he disregarded the prophecy that had lost the life of a warrior.

"WoeSpring, my mentor, *died* because of that StarClan-forsaken prophecy! Do you *dare* doubt the words of my mentor?" Their voice was filled with raw emotion, their heart shattered to pieces because of the death of a cat they had cherished dearly. FatePaw jumped, caught off guard by the sudden outburst of his angry, fuming mentor. As he turned to face his mentor, he readied himself for the words he was about to yowl.

"You know what? Perhaps I do," he screeched out, emotion and anger swelling into his defiant tone. His claws raked the dirt, as he confronted his mentor, his tail lashing. BerryBush flinched as if she'd been struck by claws, and then she let out a furious yowl.

"It *has* to come true! Now, instead of sulking like a whiny kit, go get the catmint!" They screeched, the retort that had been building up in their throat releasing like a fiery rage. They breathed in, their eyes narrowed to slits as she stared at FatePaw. FatePaw could see a bitter tang of pain and loss welling up in her gaze. His mentor flinched away, before storming off.

It was around sundown. The sky, a deep mix of a hazy red and orange, reflected across the light pelts of ThunderClan warriors. The sun, low in the sky, glared a blinding light into the eyes of FatePaw, causing him to lower his eyes and stare at the amber-lit ground. Warriors, young and old, shared tongues.

It was... peaceful. He felt his muscles relax, as the light chatter of YewClaw, to her friend, ThrushFur, traveled across the clearing. Her voice seemed tender, as she looked at a tempered ThrushFur with a calmness. The brown molly seemed to relax a moment later, as YewClaw put her paw across ThrushFurs.

FatePaw smiled slightly- warriors like them- YewClaw, and ThrushFur, were warriors he could depend on. He remembered how the light brown molly had raised him and his brother, after the death of their mother. YewClaw had always hung around, too, making sure to bring ThrushFur prey, and to help with the kits. Her gentle words had always soothed FatePaws anxiety.

Perhaps her tender words could soothe his anger.

As he padded across towards the two, aloud and agonized wail echoed through camp, sending shivers through the spines of every warrior. FatePaw, jolted by the moment of peace, looked for the source of the wail. Pelt bristling with alarm, FatePaw spotted the strong, ruthless frame of SandFur. His heart sank as he looked at the golden warrior padding towards him. Why him, out of all warriors? He judged FallenPaw...

He couldn't help but force a polite smile as he neared the warrior who had judged his brother for so long. *Keep calm. Relax.* As he drew closer, he could tell the golden tom was in a great deal of pain, as he held his paw up in the air, his nose scrunched up in a haze of pain. As the young apprentice neared the warrior, relief crossed his pain-stricken face.

Forcing comforting words, he eased the warrior to lay down on his paws, so he could look closer at SandFurs's wounded paw, and make sure that nothing serious had happened. His heart raced, was it a sprain, or something much more dire? His calmness started to spiral into one of anxiety. The warrior had easily obeyed and let out a sigh of relief as he sat down, applying less pressure to the wounded paw.

"SandFur, what's wrong?" FatePaw softly asked, as he tenderly held the paw in his hold, his eyes scanning for any signs of broken bones. He didn't see any... and he didn't see any scrapes, either. More panic filled him, and he held his breath, awaiting the answer the SandFur- could it possibly be an internal wound? Even with how much he disliked SandFur, no warrior deserved a wound like that.

The peace, the calmness, that FatePaw had felt, had vanished in a

second, pierced through the anguished wail of SandFur.

"I've..." SandFur started, his eyes scrunched up. FatePaw leaned in, his heart racing. SandFur sounded so nervous... he was starting to think it was a bad wound. SandFur breathed in, and then muttered, "I've stepped in a nettle bush!" That had not been what FatePaw was expecting. SandFur blinked hopefully.

He threw the warrior's paw down with a snarl, a frown crossing his face. Was SandFur serious? He was acting like it! With the amount of wailing and screeching SandFur had managed to muster, it had been like his paws had been torn off! *It's just a StarClan forsaken thorn!* Bristling at the warrior, he spat, "Treat it yourself! I have more important things to do!

Did SandFur *really* think he would help him, after the way he had treated FallenPaw? How had he almost let him die? *You almost let him drown, all because of a prophecy that FinShadow decided must be true! And now, after being all "heroic" and brave, you're wailing over a thorn.* SandFur stared at him at shock, before yowling,

"But you're the medicine cat! You're *supposed* to help me!" Surprise laced his tone, the warrior had clearly not expected to be rejected by the young tom. FatePaws anger only grew, as SandFur still seemed so insistent on getting a thorn taken out of his paw like a kit wet behind the ears.

"And why should I? Like I've said before, you can treat it yourself, and you don't deserve it! Not after the way you've *treated my brother*!" His voice became shrill at the last few words, ears flattening on his head. Pushing his muzzle against SandFurs, he growled, "If you don't treat my brother the right way, then I won't treat you,"

SandFur twitched his ears nervously as he pressed himself lower to the dirt. His tail brushed the ground. Then, he raised his head, and met FatePaws cold gaze with his own.

"You think you can scare me? Be a good clanmate, and treat my wou-

"GooseEye *died* because you couldn't heal him in time!" His voice rose, and FatePaw was sure he could hear a crack of grief in his tone. *You mean, he died because of a fight* you started. "You owe me everything, FatePaw! My best friend is gone because of *you!*" He looked up to the stars, as if looking up at the friend he had lost in a battle. "FatePaw, I loved him, and you-you owe me-

"For the last time, no! Go find a different clanmate to wail too, SandFur!" FatePaw hissed, almost ready to wipe SandFur's cold gaze off his face with his claws. Quick pawsteps neared the two,

"FatePaw! What's going on?" The cross voice of BerryBush traveled over the clearing. Feeling a sense of anger in their tone, he turned to stare at them, his gaze burning into their pelt. At the sound of his mentor's tone, SandFur looked up in relief, his green eyes growing soft.

"FatePaws refusing to treat my paw!" SandFur complained, rising to his paws with a scowl. He held up his paw, "I've got this thorn in my paw, and he told me to treat it myself!"

BerryBush turned to glare at FatePaw: FatePaw cringed inwardly. But he stared back at them, not willing to so easily cower down. *Just a few sunrises ago, I would've cowered down like a mewling kit... but now, I'm not going to let my mentor shove my choices down. Why do they expect me to treat such a mouse brained warrior?*

"...FatePaw," their gaze softened a moment later, and they rested their tail on FatePaws shoulder, eyes suddenly filled with sympathy. "Let's talk," they added, their voice sad. The wind stirred.

SandFur opened his mouth to protest, but BerryBush flicked their tail over his mouth. "Go find some other cat, SandFur. Me and FatePaw need to speak," they spoke in a shockingly soft tone towards the golden tom, as if they were afraid of breaking his heart into two. Perhaps more harsh words would break him, his mind on GooseEye...

SandFur seemed to want to argue, but then, the anger in his eyes faded into one of sadness and acceptance at their words, "alright, BerryBush. Sorry, FatePaw, it really was FallenPaws fault

anyways..." he turned away, and limped towards a different direction. Much to FatePaws surprise, he was heading towards YewClaw and ThrushFur. *I wonder why...*

"The three of them used to be a group of friends," BerryBush explained, seeming to have read his mind. "Or, at least, YewClaw and SandFur...they drifted apart after the river incident with your brother," she paused, "but even then... they're the only cats he really knows," they rose to their paws, and beckoned FatePaw to follow them. At their movement, FatePaw let out a sigh, but followed them as they headed out of camp.

"FatePaw," BerryBush looked at FatePaw with a look of pity. "Ever since the death of GooseEye, you've been..." they paused, as if looking for the right word, "...well, angry. It's unlike you, FatePaw," they whispered quietly, looking into FatePaws eyes. At BerryBush's words, FatePaw felt a sense of irritation, his hackles rising. He bared his teeth fiercely, a wave of anger passing over to him. He hissed with an edge to his tone,

"So, I'm not shy anymore. So *what*?" He snarled, his tone rising. Who was BerryBush to worry about his anger- he had every right to be angry! The clan was falling apart- and the fact that half the clan had a hatred against FallenPaw because of a StarClan cursed prophecy wasn't helping either. FatePaw felt like his head would burst if one more warrior insisted, he followed the chains of StarClan: by killing FallenPaw. He knew they'd never tell him to relax, or tell him that it was alright he didn't want to kill his brother...

BerryBush narrowed their eyes, digging their claws into the dirt to steady themselves. FatePaw nearly scoffed- his mentor couldn't even stay on their own paws without impatience knocking them over. A shadow fell over BerryBush- FatePaw looked up. Dark clouds were starting to gather, blocking out the hazy red sunlight as the sun settled down for the night.

"Oh, *please*, FatePaw! It's clear you've been letting your emotions control you, so you've been lashing out at any possible chance!" Their tail lashed, as more clouds started to gather. As his mentor spoke, FatePaw, glaring at BerryBush, growled. BerryBush glanced at him sharply as if to silence him, and then went on, "I tried to

ignore it at first. But now you've just been a nuisance to the clan, and more cats have been avoiding you! Even injured warriors, because they'd rather bleed out than let you scathe them with your sharp tongue!" FatePaw bristled.

"That's not true! Just yesterday, WhisperStream came to me for a thorn in his paw! And Thrush-

"Silence!" BerryStream cut him off, as the sky grew to a dark gray. BerryBush raised their voice to be heard over the loud, howling wind. FatePaw took a step back, as if struck, startled by his mentor's furious anger. "That's called *privilege*, FatePaw! Every cat you've spared of your bitter words are those who support FallenPaw: none other! How do you think the clan will go on if their own medicine cat is picking favorites like a mother to her kits?"

FatePaw stiffened. "Listen!" He spat, his voice trembling. "Ever since GooseEye died, every cat has just been blaming FallenPaw more-when it wasn't even his fault GooseEye died!" BerryBush watched him, their gaze unreadable. FatePaw felt like it was scorching his pelt, burning it, despite the chill in the air. He shivered, and then went on, "it's mine, BerryBush! If I had arrived in time to treat him, he could have survived! We lost a warrior because I couldn't be quick on my paws!" The ground was shaking. FatePaw dug his claws into the dirt to support himself: and then he realized it was *him* who was shaking, not the cold, *steady* ground beneath his trembling figure.

"That's not true-" BerryBush started to speak.

"Yes, it is!" He spat, his tail lashing. He closed his eyes, breathing in the cold, piercing air, as freezing ice seemed to frost his heart, making it cold. It didn't bleed out: it was frozen, stuck in a constant battle of grief and anger. "But every cat chooses to ignore that because they'd rather blame an "already cursed" apprentice than the truth: there's your "privilege", BerryBush," He taunted the word, letting it slide over his tongue with ease, a bitter smile crossing his muzzle. Laughs shook his shoulders, and he shook his head, staring at BerryBush as thick, cold flecks started to fall between them, freezing FatePaw's fur.

"FatePaw..." BerryBush trailed off, looking down at their thick paws. White splotches of powder started to cover the blueish-black spots on her fur, making her pelt a complete powdery white. FatePaw narrowed his eyes- BerryBush knew he was right; they were at a loss of words. All of their anger had seemed to vanish into the cold air and the snow, replaced by sadness. She breathed out a puff of white, shivering.

"Cold, BerryBush?" He asked them bitterly, fluffing out his fur to blanket his own skin from the dropping temperature. It was cold. "Well, then, I guess you know how *I've* felt for my whole life, then. How *FallenPaw* has felt: cold," He spat, as he wanted to laugh again. He would, if frost hadn't started to edge his white muzzle. It was ironic- BerryBush spoke about privilege, about how he needed to treat the clan better- when they didn't even do it themselves, towards FallenPaw. *What a bold move.*

He shook his head again as BerryBush stared, their eyes wide with desperation and contriteness, paws shifting in the now-powdery ground below. He turned away, tail brushing against the cold snow below, as he growled. He hauled himself away, each step forced, as he shivered from the cold.

But now, FatePaw knew, it wasn't the chill in the air that affected him, making him shiver, making his head ring, no, StarClan, it couldn't be that. It wasn't. It was the cold piercing his heart- sealing it into a trance. A trance of anger and guilt, starting a storm in his heart and in his mind, brewing a blizzard in his gaze, differing the way he saw the clan through his green gaze.

I don't know what I'm going to do anymore: but I know one thing. I'll never follow the word of StarClan anymore. That may have been what I wanted once, but now, I want to curse the stars. He stared up at the sky, and then rose his head, his voice rising to a yowl.

"Deceive us all you want, StarClan! Use your useless words on the warriors below, guide our paws all you want: "I don't care anymore," his claws unsheathed, and he raked his claws across the air, and spoke one last time, his voice barely a whisper now. "Because you won't have your "fate of a warrior" anymore. You have failed, and soon enough, every cat will see that,"

Whether they want to, or not.

Chapter Fourteen

The sun hung low in the sky, soaking the training hollow in a beautiful, warm bliss of yellows, reds and oranges. DewPaw stood at the edge of the clearing, his warm, oak-colored eyes focused on the tan warrior ahead of time. He and YewClaw were training in the morning light, taking advantage of the dawn time to avoid other warriors, who would still be sound asleep in their dens.

YewClaw had woken DewPaw just as sunlight had started to peak over the ridges of the moors far in the distance, telling him that they'd train in the morning, as other cats snored the day away. So now, here they were, training. DewPaw drew in a breath of the crisp air, as he bounded gracefully towards his mentor, his light paws sliding easily over the slick snow below.

YewClaw watched him, her sage-green eyes filling with a softness as he bounded towards her. She nodded approval as DewPaw slowed to stop at her paws, his lithe body slithering easily towards his targeted stop. He looked up at YewClaw earnestly, blinking up at her as she smiled back. She nudged him with affectionate delight, a purr rumbling through her throat.

"You're improving wonderfully, DewPaw," she praised pleasantly. DewPaw felt his chest rise as his mentor praised his improvement, her voice filled with genuine pride. "You're quicker than a mouse, and stealthier than a fox," she sounded cheery.

A smile crossed DewPaw's face at her words- she really was proud of him, as she always had been. She had always believed in him and had given him a chance, even when other warriors had looked down on him, doubting his abilities to be a warrior. She had walked by him, stride by stride, and DewPaw felt like he truly belonged by her. YewClaw went on,

"You may be unable to speak, but you've proven that actions speak louder than words ever will," she murmured, her voice growing fierce, "I'm proud to have you as my apprentice. Let's go on, shall

we?"

DewPaw nodded eagerly, his pelt shining with a sense of achievement. Fueled by his mentor's inspiring words, he dashed back to the other side of the clearing, ready to impress his mentor even more. So, he dug his claws into the log under him without a moment's hesitation and leaped effortlessly onto a log a few fox-lengths ahead of him. He puffed out his chest, letting out a prideful purr.

Despite being unable to speak, DewPaw felt like he was finally starting to prove his worth to the clan. His whole life, he had always been told that he would never make it to a warrior. Whispers had filled camp, murmuring about how he would be forever an elder, safe from any dangers from outside. Even his own mother had insisted he remain an elder for his safety- but DewPaw had been given a chance- and he was proving it well.

The two of them trained until the sun marked midday, now shining its bright array of yellows across the snow-tipped oaks. As they finished their training session, YewClaw nudged DewPaw with her long tail, causing him to glance at her.

"You've done great today, let us head back to camp to rest. Pick something from the pile, you deserve it, and need to replenish your strength," she told him, before turning tail and ducking under the hedge to leave the training hollow. DewPaw followed her, his smaller body fitting easily under the hedge.

Snow stretched farther than DewPaw could ever imagine, painting the landscape around him into a beautiful outlook of whites, blues, and shine. As they headed into camp, a loud voice from the other side of camp startled DewPaw.

"DewPaw!" OwlStar leapt from the leader's rock onto the sandy earth below, before gliding over to DewPaw, his eyes glittering. For a heartbeat, DewPaw had to stop himself from flinching away- he must be trouble, why else would the leader be coming to him? A moment later, though, he relaxed; OwlStar's gaze had kindness glittering in them.

"Greetings, OwlStar," YewClaw dipped her head politely. OwlStar nodded in return.

"I take it training was well?" The large tom asked the molly, his ear flicking. YewClaw nodded with a purr,

"Yes. DewPaw is a fast learner! Zoom enough, we'll be working on advanced techniques!" DewPaw felt like he was floating in the air at his mentor's praise. The sun seemed to beam down on him as he puffed out his chest, a wide grin crossing his face. "He'll be a warrior soon enough!"

OwlStar blinked with a warming purr, "I'd expect none else from this young tom," he turned to glance at DewPaw. DewPaw blinked earnestly, puffing his chest out higher as pride filled him to the tail-tip.

"I'm sure YewClaw is just overexaggerating to make DewPaw feel better about himself!" DewPaw's mother, BriarDust, growled.

YewClaw bristled, but OwlStar rose his tail to stop her from leaping at the molly. YewClaw growled. "What you claim isn't true," she meowed. "Show more faith in your son. I get you want to protect him but scathing him with your tongue is no way to do it! How would you feel if some cat put you down to keep you safe?"

"Yes, you're right, YewClaw..." BriarDust sounded uncomfortable, avoiding the scorching gaze of the other. "But don't forget that he is *my* son, I can say what I like..." with that, she stalked away. DewPaw watched her leave, trying to swallow back the pain that was building up in his throat.

"DewPaw... come to my den," the sudden request from OwlStar startled DewPaw. He glanced at his leader and quickly nodded, easing at the softness in his leader's gaze. *He see's something in me-something BriarDust doesn't!*

He glanced at YewClaw, expecting to see her proud of receiving such respect from his leader, but was surprised to see a look of suspicion in her gaze instead. She flicked her ear, "OwlStar, I'm his mentor. I don't think it's needed for a clan leader to speak to an

apprentice *alone* so many times," her tail brushed the ground for a moment. "Let him rest,"

"Oh YewClaw, don't fret. I'm sure he's more than happy to have the chance to speak with me," although his words seemed kind, DewPaw could tell that OwlStar was getting irritated.

YewClaw growled for a moment, her eye's seeming to narrow as she looked at the leader. DewPaw's fur pricked at the tension hanging in the air.

"Is that true, DewPaw?" YewClaw asked him. DewPaw nodded quickly, still confused on why YewClaw was so uspet- it was an honor to speak to OwlStar- an honor barley any apprentice received! Worried she would disapprove; he avoided her gaze.

"So, he wishes to speak with me," OwlStar pointed out, giving YewClaw a long and hard stare. A moment later, the normal calmness reappeared. "Thank you for your concern, YewClaw. But me and DewPaw must get heading to my den, now,"

YewClaw nodded at DewPaw, before turning away. DewPaw quickly dashed foward and nuzzled her fur, to show that he wasn't angry or disappointed with her. YewClaw smiled half-heartedly back, but her gaze darkened as OwlStar met hers. DewPaw touched her shoulder with his tail, before turning and following OwlStar into his den.

OwlStar sat down in the small clearing and wrapped his tail around his paws. "So," he started, "you're probably confused on why YewClaw was so hostile towards me, am I right?" DewPaw nodded his head yes. OwlStar sighed and spoke again. "Well, YewClaw wasn't wrong when she told me that a leader shouldn't talk to an apprentice so much, as normally, a leader would leave that to their mentor...."

He nodded to the direction of the den outside, where YewClaw still stood. DewPaw felt his heart rise in his chest, desperately hoping his wishes to be true. Please say what I think you're gonna say...!

"We speak so much because I see something special in you DewPaw,

like I've said before," his voice poured like honey, making DewPaw shiver. DewPaw greedily drank in the words of OwlStar, letting them bring joy to his troubled mind. "I've noticed your mother has really never had faith in you, right?" He hummed.

DewPaw nodded. His mother, was, well, complicated. When he had been a kit, she had refused to accept that he could be a warrior. She had always been following his tiny paw-steps, ready to catch him if he tripped- and ready to do anything and everything for him, if he needed it. All because he couldn't speak! *And then, I became an apprentice... and she grew even more overprotective...* DewPaw thought. Even though she expressed disappointment and disdain toward her son, DewPaw knew it was only out of fear of losing him- but either way, it hurt.

She had never believed in him. OwlStar scanned DewPaw's gaze, his own eyes reflecting DewPaw's hurt, and passion. OwlStar rose to his paws and slowly headed over to the young apprentice, running his tail across DewPaws flank, letting out a sad murmur.

"I know how it feels to not have a mother," he murmured quietly, circling around DewPaw. "That's why I see so much in you, DewPaw- ever since the moment your mother gave birth to you," he spoke with such a gentleness that DewPaw wanted to wrap in soft furs. *He sees me. Unlike BriarDust, he sees me and knows I'll be a great warrior! I'm special!* He thought.

"OwlStar, can I-" FinShadow had poked his head in, but he cut himself off, looking embarrassed. "Oh. Sorry. You two go on with your little talk, I'll come back later," the warrior vanished. OwlStar purred in amusement.

"FinShadow... he's not that much of a parent either, is he? To your friend, I mean," when DewPaw nodded, OwlStar went on, "you're very observatory, aren't you?" He didn't wait for an answer, "I see it in the way you look at others- you see their stories in their eyes, and that takes great skill," he nodded with approval. "Skill like that can do great in battle,"

DewPaw smiled, letting the praise wrap around him. He lifted his head proudly, his hurt vanishing away like a mist. OwlStar saw so

much in him- so much good that *so many cats* had failed to notice. *OwlStar really does care...*

"Speaking of battle, I'm glad to hear training is going well," he purred. "With your skills and ability to read other cats, you'll be beneficial in battle," DewPaw could already imagine it- knocking one cat over, and then sensing the panic in anothers gaze... detecting the weaknesses of each warrior... *FallenPaw would be so impressed!* He thought with a purr.

"One last thing, DewPaw, I just wanted to say... I'm proud of how far you have come," OwlStar purred.

DewPaw's legs nearly gave away as he shook with shock, but pride. He stared up at his leader, his eyes joyfully watering up. Only one other cat had said that to him- YewClaw- and if OwlStar, his own leader, were saying that, then it must be true. His heart swelling with joy, he waited for OwlStar to finish. Really?

"Despite your lack of words, you have carried on. Despite all the judgement and harshness, you haven't let the clan tear you down to the role of an elder- you've stood for who you want to be, and that's strong," OwlStar purred steadily. DewPaw stood taller. "It isn't always easy for a cat to do that, DewPaw. GooseEye, for example- he had *so much* potential, but he wasted it on who he thought he was- a vengeful cat, instead of who he really was- an honorable warrior," his voice lowered a bit.

GooseEye. DewPaw thought, remembering the tom who had died during the battle during last moons gathering. Strucken by the loss of his kin in the flood, GooseEye had blamed the prophecy for the loss, and had so fiercely believed that if the prophecy was followed, his kin would be avenged.

He let his grief blind him until his death- only then did he realize his true self... DewPaw thought. With an uncomfortable prick, he remembered OwlStar's refusual to honor the tom with the words of StarClan. OwlStar seemed to notice this, and spoke softly,

"Yes, I knew you'd wonder that eventually," he sighed, "why I didn't give him the words a lost warrior deserves," for a moment, a fierce

torrent of guilt seemed to pour into his voice, but as quickly as it came, it was lost. "It's just... why would I send good wishes to a warrior who so *blindly* followed StarClan?" His hackles rose a bit, and he spat furiously.

DewPaw took a step back, his eye's widening in alarm- OwlStar's calm appearance had suddenly turned into one of a burning, fierce anger. OwlStar wasn't the type of cat to get angry, unless if he were really prevoked. OwlStar glanced at DewPaw, and the wild look in his eyes faded away. *Or... is he just hiding it?* DewPaw thought.

OwlStar breathed out. "Sorry about that, DewPaw, I... don't know what came over me," he murmured. "It's just... should we really follow the word of StarClan so much?" He sounded lost. DewPaw blinked in shock- clan leaders *never* doubted the word of StarClan- not since the lead of the great BlueStar! *Sure, their prophecies might not make sense, but... is aggression really the way to react? And OwlStar is leader! He out of all cats should have a good connection with them...*

So, he looked into the eyes of OwlStar. Beneath the shame and sadness was a deep, fierce, burning rage and anger. As DewPaw stared at them, thoughts started to race into his head, ideas brancing into facts and knowledge. *You don't trust StarClan- not since they doomed FallenPaw to be evil. You regret being weary of FallenPaw- you see StarClan as controlling, and you regret falling into their paws. But beneath that is a fierce anger- no... a fierce hatred against those who follow StarClan so closely...* OwlStar looked back, gaze unflinching, almost as if he were frozen.

You want the clan to feel welcome again.

You want the arguments to stop.

You want a good clan.

OwlStar shook his head away, his ears flattening on his head. He spoke bleakly, "Now do you understand my anger? I hope you understand DewPaw... someday, we'll have to take a stand to make the clan whole again," his claws dug into the earth for a moment. "You may go,"

DewPaw nodded and headed out.

"Stop talking about my apprentice like that!" The loud growl of ThrushFur travelled over the clearing, as the warrior glared at SandFur. YewClaw rested her tail on ThrushFur's side, whispering to her ear.

"I'll say what I want!" SandFur snapped, his fur bristling. "We all know that if FatePaw-

"Now now, SandFur," a shadow fell over the clearing, as a smooth voice spoke. DewPaw glanced over, and recognized Atticus, the newest edition to the clan. "We mustn't speak poorly of our clanmates, should me?" The golden tom flicked his tail passively, as if this was nothing but an easy talk with the angry warrior.

"But StarClan-" Atticus swooshed his tail over the mouth of SandFur before the tom could finish his sentence. Rage glittered in SandFur's gaze as Atticus glanced around. DewPaw looked up in interest, wondering what the golden warrior would have to say- he had always seemed wise, according to FallenPaw. His orange eyes swooping the clearing around him, he spoke up, his voice loud.

"StarClan isn't always right- they're just a bunch of dead warriors in the sky, trying to throw useless words around so the clans have something else than prey to survive on," BriarDust looked up. LavaBlaze stopped midchew, glancing over at the tall, golden warrior. A hush had filled the clearing.

Was Atticus, right? DewPaw wasn't sure, but as he looked at the golden warrior, he couldn't help but feel a source of power radiate off the tom- his words, thick with passion, came from the heart. *Is he right? Is StarClan really nothing more than cats in the sky? How could they possibly know so much?*

SandFur spluttered, backing away from the tom. He spit, before turning away and heading to the warrior's den. Warriors watched in a stony silence, not even his greatest supporters yowling words of abet. This silence hung in the clearing, as DewPaw looked around.

Suddenly, a fierce anger seemed to blow into camp, turning the air

around DewPaw cold. DewPaw shivered, and he turned towards the camp entrance, wondering which warrior could possibly be so upset. *I wonder if some patrol had a run-in with ShadowClan,* he thought curiously. It was entirely possible, especially since leafbare was so nearby. Due to frost, prey had started to hide away in dens to escape the killing cold.

It would be like ShadowClan to sneak a vole or two from ThunderClan territory- DewPaw had heard stories of fierce battles, cat vs cat, clan vs clan... were the effects leafbare really so nearby? He pricked his ears, expecting to hear the angry growls of WeepingSong, SwiftClaw and FinShadow, but instead, he heard the soft, quiet paw steps of a lithe, skinny cat. *That's not a patrol... that's FatePaw!*

The tom stalked in, his eyes burning with a fierce fire. His paws were stained with a powdery white, his ears flattened against his head. His pelt was blanketed in speckles of snow. *He was out during the snowshower...* DewPaw told himself, but that wasn't his main concern.

Ever since the battle of the gathering, FatePaw had been... well, not the same. His eye's had always glittered with a deep resentment, and his usually calming tone had been replaced by a rough, low voice with an edge to it. But, in those days... FatePaw hadn't been *this* angry.

"StarClan, he's mad, isn't he? I wonder why..." the faint murmur of another warrior travelled over the clearing.

Yes, FatePaw... DewPaw thought to himself, his eyes tracking the small apprentice as he hurried to the medicine den, shoving past other warriors roughly. *What* is *up with you?* As FatePaw vanished into the den, DewPaw couldn't help but fear that a part of the clan's medicine cat had been lost, torn away, in the battle against the clans.

A murmur from YewClaw confirmed his fears, as a fierce torrent of snow started to stream down on the camp again. DewPaw strained his ears, struggling to hear her words over the loud screams of the wind,

"What are we, if every day, we seem to be losing a part of FatePaw...?"

I don't know, YewClaw. I don't know... But one thing was for certain- the clan was falling apart...and DewPaw knew something had to be done about it... and he was starting to wonder if OwlStar and Atticus had the right idea. *Is StarClan really with us?*

Chapter Fifteen

"They're staring at you again," FatePaw growled, his voice dripping with anger and protectiveness. The sun hung low over the sky, glaring a harsh, orange sunlight over the lily-white glittering snow. Frost edged the foliage around camp. FatePaw's eyes darted around camp, sparkling coldly with a tone of disgust.

"No... they're glaring," FallenPaw sighed, wrapping his fluffy tail around his giant paws. His fur ruffled with unease as SwiftClaw, a senior warrior who was more hiss than bite, passed the two of them. His yellow, snake-like eyes glared down at FallenPaw like a hunter stalking its prey. *They've always glared, but ever since the death of GooseEye... they've only glared more.*

The two apprentices, fur whitened by the cold snow, sat underneath the large canopy of the butterbur, which hung over the apprentice den. FallenPaw breathed out a puff of smoke, shivering as the cold seemed to bite his bones. Letting out a quiet mew, the large apprentice fluffed out his fur, to protect himself from the fierce jaws of winter.

As SwiftClaw, whose scrawny, small frame, stalked away from FatePaw and FallenPaw, a frown etched on his scarred face, and the air around them seemed to crackle and break with a cold tension, colder than the snow beneath their paws.

FatePaw, fur bristling, let out a hiss, "he acts like you've killed the kits of the clan, with the way he looks at you!" FatePaws words, filled with venom, sliced through the air like claws to a mouse.

FallenPaw, his blue and green eyes glittering with unsatisfactory uneasiness, heaved out a long and heavy sigh. "I know, FatePaw... but I've learned to deal with it," he looked away, trying to stamp

down the anger building up in his chest. It wasn't fair! He was loyal to the clan, why should they have the right to glare at him so coldly? *Control your anger....* he reminded himself. *Or, at least keep it within.* "...so should you,"

" 'So should you?'" FatePaw repeated his words with a hint of disbelief in his tone. "Come *on,* FallenPaw! This mistreatment isn't something that should be ignored or dealt with!" He bristled, his icy-blue eyes burning like fire. "It shouldn't be *happening* in the first place!"

"I know, I know, but-

"*No*, FallenPaw!" FatePaw retorted, "What's gotten into you? You used to defend yourself all the time, but *now* all you do is sit around and act like nothing is happening! What *happened* to you?"

"I'm still angry, FatePaw, but I was never defending myself. I was lashing out!" He replied to FatePaw, trying to keep his voice low so he wouldn't attract the attention of his other clanmates. "I only ever made it worse for myself, hissing insults and flashing claws. *Ignoring it* is the best option for both of us, and you know it! Perhaps once cats notice that I can accept the hatred, they'll start to realize that I'm loyal to this clan, no matter what," he lifted his muzzle.

"What if they think that just makes it easier?" FatePaw blinked, before looking away. His head lowered and he let out a quiet, mournful whisper. "It isn't *fair*, FallenPaw! You should be allowed to express your anger, like how SandFur gets to," he sighed. "What makes you so certain that disregarding their harsh treatment will make it *better?*"

FallenPaw decided not to answer his question, because honestly... he wasn't so sure himself. What if staying silent *did* make his clanmates hate him more? Would they see his silence as a coldness? *What if they take my silence as thoughts, planning revenge?* His question was left unspoken. FatePaw had told him he had changed, but... *I'm not the only one who has changed...*

Since the battle of the gathering, which had happened a moon and a half ago, FatePaw had changed. And when a snowstorm had

struck the clan only half a moon ago, FatePaw had returned from the forest, his heart colder than before. *He's angry. It's almost as if the two of us switched our reactions to the hatred against me...* he thought.

"FallenPaw?" FatePaw nudged him, shaking FallenPaw out of his dark thoughts. He glanced at his brother, whose anger had been replaced with a gentle concern. FallenPaws heart ached as he looked at his brother's worried face, wishing to keep it forever, and wrap it in burrs. *That's the FatePaw I remember... calm, caring, yet... fun to be around.* He sighed. *Not angry and fierce.*

"Sorry, I zoned out," he paused, the air around him seemed to crack with the tension rippling off of FatePaw. "It's just... you've changed, FatePaw," his voice grew fierce, his eyes burning with a passion. FatePaw needed to hear this- before he fell too far into his pit of anger and his thirst for justice. "You're not the FatePaw I remember,"

FatePaw growled, hackles lifting once more. "*Of course* I'm different! Cat's *change,* FallenPaw!" FallenPaw watched his brother, gaze unflinching. He decided to let FatePaw go on, trying to hide his anger and worry at his brother's unusual snappiness. "BerryBush had this same exact talk with me," he rolled his eyes. "You've changed as well! So quit acting like I'm turning into some evil murderer,"

"That's not what I meant-

"Then why do you keep giving me that worried, yet angry look?" His words ended with a hiss. FallenPaw opened his mouth to respond, but nothing came out, his mouth felt dry. As FatePaw looked at him, his icy-blue eyes scanning FallenPaws green and blue ones, his narrowed eyes filled with pools of hurt. Closing his eyes, the fur on his shoulders lowering, FatePaw sighed quietly. "I never thought my own brother would reflect the treatment he received onto others,"

"FatePaw!" FallenPaw gasped, alarm racing through his fur. That wasn't what he had meant to do at all! Was that really how FatePaw saw it? Did he really see FallenPaw's discomfort as hatred? "No, FatePaw, it's not that at all! The reason I look at you that way is

because it isn't you, FatePaw! No matter how much you pretend it is,"

"Pretend?" FatePaw let out a scoff, his blue eyes springing back open with a look of concept and indignation. His words hung in the air, making everything colder than they'd felt a moment before. "This isn't pretend, FallenPaw, this is reality! Have you gone blind?" His voice rose, the anger in his eyes returning once again. "Do you really think playing passive will make all the hate die down? Do you think StarClan will see that and suddenly say 'Oh, look at FallenPaw, being all kind! Let's take back the prophecy because of smiles and purrs!'"

"No, FatePaw! But I'll be able to live a life! No cat will be able to do anything. I can live with the mistreatment, as long as I have cats by my side!" His own words started to tremble with anger. How *dare* FatePaw act like he was in the wrong for controlling his angry outbursts? *He's the one who's envisioned to 'save the clan', why should* he *get in a say of how* I *should feel?*

"Why 'live a life' when you could prove them all wrong?" FatePaw spat, "they don't care for you, so why should you treat them like royalty? *Make* them respect you, *make* them see you for you!"

FallenPaw couldn't believe his ears- FatePaw was acting insane! What could his brother possibly mean by *making* them? FallenPaw knew one thing- he could *never* force his clanmates to believe anything. So why did FatePaw- caring, understanding, burdened FatePaw- desire that force so much? *Can't he tell me that I'm living the best life I can? Didn't he notice how much worse I made it for myself when I lashed out?*

He had lashed out at everyone- including his brother. Suddenly, a wave of guilt crashed over him. "FatePaw...?" He asked quietly

Seeming to notice the change in the mood, FatePaw softened. He glanced at FallenPaw curiously, "yes?"

"I'm sorry," he murmured quietly. "I'm sorry for lashing out at you, about the dream you had,"

FatePaw looked surprised. "That was so long ago, FallenPaw! Why are you apologizing for something you already apologized for?" He sounded a bit concerned.

"Because I never really apologized. I still made excuses," his voice was thick. "So I'd like to sincerely apologize. You were terrified- any cat would be, if they'd seen a vision filled with dead clan mates," he knew he certainly would.

"It's okay, FallenPaw," he mewed. "I understand." A moment later, his ears twitched and a look of stormy annoyance crossed his features. He huffed. "That's BerryBush calling," he sighed, "see you later, FallenPaw,"

As the thin-furred apprentice vanished into the medicine den, FallenPaw was aware of some cat watching him. FallenPaw turned to see who it was, and was surprised to see DewPaw.

The black furred apprentice had a soft smile stretched on his face, his brown eyes shining with pride. His large ears pricked a bit as he noticed FallenPaw looking at him, and his gaze softened, smile growing.

FallenPaw smiled back, his heart rushing as he looked into DewPaw's gentle brown eyes. *He's proud of me.* FallenPaw thought with a purr.

For a moment, their gazes remained locked, until DewPaw broke his gaze away. The black apprentice suddenly seemed flustered, stumbling back a bit as he rubbed his eyes. FallenPaw brought a paw to his muzzle, trying to contain the laughter rumbling in his chest.

A purr still in his chest, FallenPaw leapt to his paws with a laugh. He skipped over to DewPaw, who watched with interest, brown eyes observant. *He doesn't know what's coming.* FallenPaw thought as he bounced over, smirking.

A moment later, he leapt at DewPaw knocking him over. DewPaw let out a soundless, startled gasp, brown eyes flashing with surprise, as FallenPaw knocked him into the ground.

In response, DewPaw pushed his hind legs upwards onto FallenPaws stomach, sending the fluffy apprentice flying. *Wow he's strong! Especially for his tiny size!*

"StarClan, any cat would think the two of you are kits!" The warrior's snarl, rough and angry made FallenPaw shiver. He looked to meet his father's piercing, cold blue eyes, which flamed with anger and disappointment. FallenPaw's heart sank- of course, it had to have been his father who had seen his playfulness with his friend.

The large tom was looming over his kit, his hackles bristling. His anger seemed to radiate off of his pelt, causing a few warriors to look up as peace was shattered. FinShadow, his own father, was acting like FallenPaw was an enemy ShadowClan intruder in camp.

"It's been a long day!" FallenPaw protested, his own hackles rising with defiance. He didn't care if he was 'lashing out' at the moment: he had every right to be angry.

"Cats already look at me badly- this won't do me any better!" FinShadow growled. "You're already destined to be a murderer, why do you have to act like a dumbstruck rabbit, too?" He curled his lip. DewPaw met FinShadows glare defiantly, his teeth bared in a hiss.

"FinShadow, could you do the clan a favor and shut your muzzle?" FinShadow curled his lip, scoffing, as the cold voice traveled over the clearing. FallenPaw glanced away from his father's cold eyes to meet the golden eyes of Atticus, piercing straight through FinShadow. *Atticus!* He thought, alarmed, but not in a bad way.

The golden warrior bounded over to the three of them, coldness streaming off of his pelt. His claws dug into the dirt as he slowed himself, his eyes still having a cold, piercing stare on them. FinShadow returned this stare, his blue eyes narrowing as he met Atticus' hard golden ones. However, Atticus did not break away. He kept his gaze on FinShadow, eyes unblinking. FinShadow stared for a moment longer, before breaking his gaze away.

Atticus then looked at FallenPaw, and not to his surprise, smiled. The coldness in his eyes turned into a friendly gleam. "FallenPaw!"

He cracked a larger grin at his words, and the golden warrior promptly chose to ignore FinShadow. "I take it training went well?" He inquired.

FallenPaw nodded. In the past few days, he had started up his training again- and since he had missed so many days due to his injury, he had fallen behind the progress of the other apprentices- well, with the only other one being DewPaw, it wasn't that behind- but he had still wanted to catch up. So, ThrushFur had made sure to train him extra hard, and he was catching up quickly.

I still don't know if I can forgive her, though... he thought uneasily, his tail flicking. But did ThrushFur have a reason? FallenPaw knew she had a bad experience with Atticus, but... she had just been apprentice age, as well as Atticus! *But then again... her past does come to haunt her...*

He shook his thoughts away like a burr pricking at his pelt, deciding he didn't want to think of that at the moment- because the truth was, he wasn't so sure if he should be acting so unforgiving towards his mentor. *It's not like she's forcing me not to be friends with him, and she hasn't been distant...* Was it right of him to be so angry right away?

He had to admit, it had been foolish of him to trust Atticus right away- what if the golden tom hadn't changed? What if he had been trying to fool FallenPaw and the clan? FallenPaw had heard stories about loners who had joined a clan as a friend- but had turned out to be a foe. Like DarkTail, who had deceived SkyClan, or Sol, who had found his way into the heart of many clans.

When we first met him on that patrol, we should've made sure he could be trusted... he thought to himself. But FallenPaw knew he could trust Atticus now- the tom showed nothing but a fierce loyalty to the clan. Atticus was always willing to go on patrols, golden eyes fierce. He would patrol and hunt until sundown if he could- the only cat stopping him was OwlStar.

To his surprise, the golden tom had walked away when he had been lost in his thoughts. Shooting up to his paws, FallenPaw glanced at DewPaw. DewPaw quickly nodded, and FallenPaw quickly mewed a

'goodbye' before quickening his pace to reach Atticus. Atticus didn't seem to mind- he just spoke up.

"Your days are always chaotic, aren't they?" He asked. The question surprised FallenPaw.

"Yeah....a way, I guess they are," FallenPaw looked down at his paws as they walked."Sort've like mood swings, I suppose. One moment something good is happening, but the next..." he trailed off, swallowing. *The next is cruel and unfair...*

"It must feel like a dramatic nursery tale, hm?" Atticus purred, sympathy glittering in his golden eyes. His mew rasped, and he went one, "one adventure after the other..."

"Yeah, I suppose you could say it's like that..." he trailed off, and glanced at Atticus, who was staring ahead, his own eyes reflecting pools of sadness. "You...you relate, don't you?" He tipped his head, his large ears falling to the side. Atticus nodded.

"Yes, yes I do," his voice was thick with emotion, the tone of it carrying a heavy weight of guilt, and grief. "But...unlike you, I deserve it..." voice starting to break, Atticus quickly looked away, as shame filled his gaze. He drew in a trembling breath as the two of them headed out of camp, out of earshot from others. "I was blind, for so long..."

"Blind?" FallenPaw wondered. "What are you talking about?"

"FallenPaw, you know exactly what I'm talking about!" Atticus retorted. A moment later, he relaxed. "I'm sorry, FallenPaw... I didn't mean to snap," he sounded regretful.

"No, it's fine," FallenPaw's heart ached as he looked at Atticus, who looked so sure to hate himself for his past mistakes. Terrible mistakes at that... he thought to himself. He didn't speak, letting the golden tom go on. Atticus glanced up,

"His..his name was Clockwork," he mewed, his ears lowering. "He was a kittypet, or, used to be one, explaining his name..." He seemed to struggle to go on, his claws starting to dig into the dirt

below. He drew in a breath before going on, his voice suddenly full of longing. "He was...like a father to me," he smiled a bit, before it faded. "He did what my biological father couldn't- raise me."

Was that grief in his gaze? Longing? FallenPaw frowned. Did Atticus... want Clockwork back? From the way the golden tabby spoke, it seemed like it. He spoke like an elder speaking about his old hunting days- something any cat would want back after losing it. *But... from the stories I've heard...Clockwork was a terrible cat...*

He noticed Atticus staring at him, and realized that he must of zoned out, getting lost in his thoughts- he must've looked like a dumbstruck rabbit! He shook his fur our, a bit embarrassed. *StarClan! I thought I stopped doing that...* But his question still hung in his mind- did Atticus miss Clockwork? Atticus spoke up, as if he had heard FallenPaw's thoughts.

"I miss the cat he was. The Clockwork I *knew*, before everything changed," his voice caught in his throat. FallenPaw frowned- he found it hard to picture a good Clockwork, after all the tales ThrushFur had told him- about how Clockwork had ordered certain cats in his overpopulated group to murder certain groupmates, to dwindle the count of cats.

"What was he like?" FallenPaw asked.

"Kind," Atticus sighed.

"I can't picture that..." FallenPaw mewed. Atticus looked wistful, looking into the sky. A white speckle of snow spun down and landed on his nose. Atticus slowly spoke.

"My fathers name was Ottilie- he only saw my flaws," he told FallenPaw, blinking again. His gaze hardened. "'Atticus, you were told to catch a finch, not a rabbit! Atticus, why can't you do as you're told? Atticus, you're making me look like a dumbstruck rabbit!'" His eyes grew dark as he spat the words out, his hackles rising. "Clockwork saw the pain I was going through- and took me in as his own,"

"Sort've like how ThrushFur took me in, even after she was done

nursing us," FallenPaw whispered. Atticus nodded, although he avoided FallenPaw's soft, understanding gaze. He spoke up again, flicking his bushy tail,

"He made me feel wanted. Special. That's when he took in more cats- and more. Soon enough we were starving, even in greenleaf, many cats didn't get any food, and they died." Pain reflected in his eyes, "one of those cats to die was my mother-and-" his voice started to shake. "Ottilie didn't care! He just said it was one less mouth to feed- he didn't care that his own mate had died,"

"He didn't...care?" FallenPaw was horrified- what kind of cat would dismiss the death of the cat he had sworn to love and protect? *A cat like Ottilie- that's who...* He thought to himself a moment later, shocked by the fact that Ottilie had shown such little care for his kin and loved ones.

Atticus shook his head, "that's when I disowned him as my father, Clockwork was the only cat worthy of that title," he mewed, "the cat who took me in. Anyways, the group grew and grew... and Clockwork proposed an idea to save our cats," he mewed. His eyes glittered for a moment, before disgust filled them. Regret, too. "He proposed that we kill some of them- random choices, mainly, and that one day, we'd be at the normal count again,"

"So, you did. When ThrushFur ran," FallenPaw couldn't keep the disgust out of his voice, which cat in his right mind would think killing innocent cats was alright? Sure, Atticus had been young, but so had ThrushFur!

"No!" Atticus cried out. "No... first, it was only me. First, he convinced me to kill Ottilie- such a bad cat shouldn't have been allowed to live, right?" When FallenPaw didn't answer, he went on. "So... I killed my own father with my own claws, and then with the help of Clockwork, we blamed it on a badger,"

FallenPaw hesitated- yes, Ottilie had been a terrible, terrible cat, but had he really deserved death? *Would I kill FinShadow, if I had the chance?* He asked himself. A moment later, he answered his own question. *No. The furthest I'd go would be to exile him...*

"I wish we had just exiled him," Atticus' eyes were hollow, his golden gaze shadowed. "I remember his last words... he let out a bitter laugh, and sneered 'Atticus...you? You had the guts to do this?' Even in death, he mocked me. But I still wish I'd let him live,"

"Clockwork tricked you? He... used you, didn't he? Messed with your mind, messed with the mind of a hurting, young tom..." a trickle of pity filled FallenPaw- Clockwork must've whispered the most convincing words- he must've broken Atticus to the point of murder...

"He tricked many cats to do the same..." He mewed. "And as I watched more cats die, I grew used to it. I thought live was becoming

"...ThrushFur...?" FallenPaw whispered, fear filling his tone.

"No. ThrushFur killed no cat- in fact, she survived because of *me*," his eyes shone. "I was instructed to kill her, but... her fur was so soft, her eyes so green..." he lowered his voice. "I loved her- I couldn't kill her! So, I offered her a chance to die- or to join us. She chose joining us over death, she was scared," his eyes shone, "but I'm glad I was able to save her..."

"You loved ThrushFur?" FallenPaw's mouth dropped in shock- out of all things, he hadn't expected the golden tom to love ThrushFur!

"She was solely Thrush at the time," he let out a quiet purr, "she had the most soft voice, yet she had a sparky attitude..." he trailed off. "Then, she ran. She abandoned us, on the night she had been instructed to kill a cat- but she tried to convince me to come with her," he mewed. "To join the clans, although they were just legends to us. I remember her exact words, but I refused..."

"What made you leave, then?" FallenPaw challenged. Atticus looked caught off guard, as if he hadn't expected an answer. For a moment he remained silent, stunned stupid by his question. He cleared his throat, then cleared it again, and waited some more. A moment later, his fur smoothed, and he replied.

"A few days after... her words convinced me," he nodded. "I

assumed she'd been made a warrior by then- we were near warrior age, after all- so... I left, and started to look for the clans..." he shivered, looking down.

"What took you so long?" FallenPaw mewed, curious. "It only took ThrushFur a few days to get here- how'd it take moons for you to arrive?" He knew that Atticus must've left Clockworks group moons ago- as he had told him that he had left a few days after ThrushFur had- and ThrushFur had joined the clan moons before he had been born.

"I..." Embarrassment filled his gaze, and he coughed awkwardly. "I got lost," he admitted. "At first, the journey was easy, but eventually... twolegs almost got me. I ran as quick I could, but they got me, and trapped me in their twoleg mesh," he shuddered. FallenPaw tipped his head.

"Mesh?"

"It was like a den, only more square..." he pondered for a moment, before going on, "the bottom of this twoleg-mesh was made out of wood, while the sides and the top were walls of silver lines," he finished. FallenPaw was still confused- but he decided not to push on.

"How'd you get here, then?" He asked.

"I escaped,"

"How?" He questioned, curious yet again- he knew he would never be able to escape a twoleg! He would likely be in such a panic that he'd trip over his own paws!

Atticus winked at him, smirking, "that's my secret to keep," then, his serious expression returned. "After I escaped the twolegs, I kept going, until I found the patrol, and joined the clan." FallenPaw was sure he could see a mix of emotions in Atticus' gaze- regret, for being a part of Clockworks group, but also relief... at the chance to be himself, perhaps?

"And what about ThrushFur?" He tipped his head. Atticus let out a

long, mournful sigh, his golden eyes sad.

"A part of me thought she'd be waiting for me- a part of me thought she'd still love me," he looked down. "She *must* have loved me, if she'd ask me to go with her! But now I realize that her heart is with another warrior, not me..." he trailed off. "But, I'm glad she lived a life worth living. I'll prove myself to her- as a friend- and to every cat in the clan," he ran his tail across his paws, rising to them. "I'll atone for my mistakes, and every cat will see it!"

FallenPaw tried to purr, but his mind had returned to his brother, FatePaw. So many cats were changing... and one of those cats included his brother, FatePaw. His cheerful, shy, jumpy brother had transformed into a cold and grudgeful cat. *He's not the same cat he was when we became apprentices...* he thought. The prophecy has changed him, too...

Atticus seemed to notice his change in attitude and nudged him. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," FallenPaw lied, his tone flat. "Everything is fine, and it'll always be fine. Why wouldn't it be?" He looked up at the sky. Clouds had broken up, revealing the stars in the just-darkening sky. He blinked, and then whispered, "After all, Starclan is watching us,and everything will be fine," He muttered, turning away. "After all, Starclan is all wise and mighty- so, why would they look down on an apprentice?"

As he spoke, he felt as if the stars glared down at him, freezing him to the core. He lifted his muzzle, closing his eyes. Starclan may have sent the vision, Starclan might be against him, but he knew he'd prove himself to them- and to his clan. No matter what it took, he would make his clan proud.

I just hope FatePaw lets me *do this...instead of carving out my path himself.*

Hey readers! Longest chapter, huh?

We're more than half-way through with Book One, now! With that, I have a few questions, answer in the comments if you'd like ^^

(Please do :D!)

Who is your favorite protagonist? Why?

Who is your favorite antagonist? Why?

What was your favorite scene in this book so far?

Who are your favorite characters? Why?

And, if you had to choose one cat to have a sidestory, who would you choose, and why?

Thats all! See you next chapter :)

Chapter Sixteen

Tw: Character death, descriptive death

"No, no no! Starclan, why must I be here *again?" Blackness. Everything around him was shadowed, nothing but shadows. The black mist seemed to be swallowing FatePaw, pressing into his sides. into his fur. Wherever he looked, all he could see were the shadows in front of him. "Whoever brought me here, come out!" His claws unsheathed. Starclan could mess with him all they wanted: but they wouldn't be able to escape his claws.*

As he snarled, his voice echoed around the clearing, left unanswered. Of course, no cat answered! The clearing was clearly empty- not a single cat was in range! He was alone in this star-clan-cursed land; or, at least, the area he resided in was empty. Many lost warriors reside here, suffering... *As he pricked his ears, he picked the distant wails of warriors far off, filled with agony.*

TigerStar: leader of TigerClan... *He thought with a shudder, remembering his last experience here- he had seen the tabby tom sprawled out in front of his paws, blood pooling from a terrible wound that had been clawed from his neck to his stomach.* Even TigerStar, feared by all, pleaded for help... why has StarClan sent me here?

No, he hadn't come here to be afraid- if that was what Starclan intended, he would refuse to be afraid! StarClan could eat frog dung. No, he wouldn't be scared. So, he swallowed, shoving his fear away into the deepest parts of his mind. He had been here before, what was there to be afraid of? The dark? He scoffed; the dark was a kits fear, and he certainly wasn't a kit!

No, he had lost his kithood long ago- all due to the treatment of his clan. At first, his clan had respected him- but FatePaw had hated it. They had showered him with gifts, and had praised him, while at the same time, they had hissed at him to murder his own brother! One day.

though, their waiting had thinned- they had started to thirst for the death of FallenPaw: and they had grown cold towards FatePaw.

Not only that, but they've always treated FallenPaw like an outsider! *He bristled- as he had received blossoms of loves, and purrs and had been praised as a hero, his brother had been greeted with snarls. Even his own father, FinShadow, had joined in! Although at first, he had tried to be kind, his true personality had started to glitter through his mask.*

But none of that would have happened, if it hadn't been for that Starclan forsaken prophecy. What was the point? Why couldn't StarClan have kept the prophecy to themselves? They could've dealt with it themselves- like steering FallenPaw towards the right path!

It was almost like they had wanted *trouble.*

Still, no cat had answered him. Frustrated, FatePaw scowled: what was the point of being sent here, if no cat was to speak to him? He had only just closed his eyes, so this dream would last awhile.

So, having no choice, he started to walk. Was this what StarClan wanted? "Last time I asked, Starclan didn't normally give their apprentices walking exercises!" He muttered under his breath, although he was speaking to no cat. No cat but himself, that was.

It felt weird- walking in utter darkness. He couldn't see in front of his paws! He walked slowly, halting every few moments to feel the area around his paws with his whiskers. If I can't see anything, I can try to scent other ways. *He thought.* No way am I tripping on something!

"FatePaw," a diplomatic voice traveled across the clearing, causing FatePaw to perk his ears. He turned to the source of the sound and spotted the Russian blue she-cat. BlueStar! She was looking at FatePaw, eyes guarded. FatePaw lifted his head and returned her gaze, his own hostile. His eyes narrowed as he glared at BlueStar, fur bristling with anger.

He remembered the last time he had seen her, when she had insisted he kill his brother. When she had dumped her own stories and trauma onto him, trying to convince him to follow his "path". Since then, he had

despised her for her manipulative tactics. And yet, every cat worships the stars- do they not realize how cursed they are?

"What do you want?" FatePaw spat, eyes burning with fiery flames of rage. His voice was laced with venom. "Are you here to try to trick me again?" His hackles rose, "No, I'm not going to kill my brother!" His tail lashed- last time he had refused BlueStar had left him, swearing that his life would end in pain and bloodshed- that he would be alone. What did she want now?

BlueStar didn't flinch at his snarls. She blinked, before speaking, "FatePaw, I'm only here to offer you a choice- I'm not here to trick you," she added. At her words, FatePaw narrowed his eyes. A choice? What in StarClan could his choice be?

"You have a choice, FatePaw," BlueStar mewed calmly. "You can keep going down the path of revenge and hatred that you've tread along, or, you can choose a better path; and follow your destiny," she blinked. "You have neglected many of your clanmates, FatePaw,"

"They deserved it!" He bristled. "Plus, I've done nothing wrong! All I've done is protect my brother and my clan!" He scoffed- BlueStar was acting like he was a terrible cat for not killing his brother. BlueStar softened.

"You're not doing anything wrong," she murmured. "Or, at least, your reasoning.... but FatePaw, holding onto this anger and rage will only lead to your destruction," she shifted her paws. "You have the potential to be a great medicine cat- you just have to let go of your anger,"

FatePaw scowled. "Potential? When my clanmates don't see me as me?" He threw his head back to laugh, tail curling. "You've got bees in your brain! Every cat just sees me as "the brother who will 'save' the clan by murdering FallenPaw!" Venom laced his tone. He sneered, curling his lip. "What, am I expected to suffer while I help my clanmates thrive? Why should I, when all they do is treat me like a failed prophecy?"

BlueStar swallowed. For a moment she was silent, as if unsure how to answer his question. Then, she spoke. "I know you mean well, FatePaw, but..." she trailed off for a moment, before going on. "You're

not alone. You have cats who support you! FallenPaw, DewPaw, ThrushFur, and so much more!" She looked at him pleadingly, before adding, "Please, FatePaw. Don't join the clan's fury,"

FatePaw bristled, his eyes narrowed. He hissed, "Unlike them, my fury is reasonable!" His tail lashed. "And if they don't agree that FallenPaw is a loyal clanmate, I'll find some way to prove to them that he is!"

BlueStar held up a paw, cutting him off from saying anything else. "Don't say that. ThunderClan doesn't need another cat who hates them," her eyes narrowed. "Especially not from a higher power, like ThunderClan medicine cat,"

"Medicine cat apprentice," *FatePaw reminded her sharply, his eyes flashing. "I won't be a full medicine cat for a long while, BlueStar! No cat will care if I glare a bit," he flicked his tail dismissively, although, underneath his controlled anger, fury burned underneath, ready to spill. How dare BlueStar tell him how he should feel?* Why in StarClan should I control my anger? For the better of the clan? *He flicked his ears, scoffing.* My Clanmates should be the cats controlling themselves, not me!

"Your clanmates have a reason*," she spat, her fur suddenly twice the size of her normal frame. "Starclan is always to be listened to, you fox-heart! Just because it involves you and your kin doesn't mean you get to avoid it!" She bristled: FatePaw was sure he could detect anguish deep in her blue gaze.* She gave up everything for a prophecy. *He realized.* Even her kits.

But that didn't matter! "Just because you decided to make stupid choices due to Starclan's word doesn't mean I will," he growled. "Starclan never told you to get rid of your kits, Starclan never told-

"But it led to my destiny!" BlueStar snarled, "Without Starclan, ThistleClaw would've destroyed ThunderClan!" Foam bubbled at her lips as if a rage had taken control of her. Her blue gaze had been broken by fiery flames. Shadowed in the unnatural blackness, her eyes glowed. "I sacrificed everything for the good of my clan, and for the good of Starclan," her eyes narrowed. "So should you,"

"FallenPaw is the only kin I have left!" FatePaw growled,

"You have FinShadow!"

"FinShadow is not my father. If he were, he would treat me as his son, not just some failed hero to the clan," his eyes narrowed. His voice startled to tremble, pain breaking into the low tone. He raised his muzzle, trying to hide the torment in his gaze. "He would be proud of the medicine cat I strived to be!"

"The medicine cat you can *be, after you fulfill your duty to Starclan,"*

He trembled. Was that really how Starclan saw it? Did they really think he had to earn his father's respect and love? All because a prophecy told him to murder his brother in cold blood? His brother, who had done nothing wrong? For a moment, he was silent. His mother- he hadn't even met his mother, as she had died at the very birth of him and FallenPaw. And FinShadow- FinShadow had raked his claws across the muzzle of FatePaw after he hadn't poisoned his brother with berries that could kill.

He bared his teeth. "So, you're saying I can only earn respect after I kill my kin?" Pain filled his mew, "you're saying I don't deserve respect for who I am?"

"Yes." BlueStar's cold response caused FatePaw to freeze. He stiffened, turning his head slowly to glare at the Russian blue. BlueStar met his gaze, and held her paw forward. Death berries glistened, and FatePaw grew stiff. Deathberries could be fatal to any cat- even a strong apprentice like FallenPaw. He took the berries, but glared.

"What?" He spat. "You want me to kill an innocent apprentice? With deathberries? I thought StarClan cared about the living cats!" He howled, tail lashing. His eyes flashed and his hackles rose. Unable to hide the growing fury on his face, his eyes narrowed to small blue slits. Auburn red-striped tail rising in the air, he met BlueStar's gaze.

Suddenly, pain flashed across his flesh- he had been attacked! Claws tore into his fur, just below his eye. Horror pulsing through him FatePaw reared back, letting out a shriek of alarm. Something warm dribbled down FatePaw's cheek and slid off onto the ground. She nearly got my eye! *He thought.*

He dug his claws into the ground below- how dare BlueStar attack him? She had just been speaking about how he could be a good medicine cat, but then she had attacked him! And he was meant to be a prophet, anyway. If StarClan cared so much about their prophecy, they'd treat him better! She was treating him like a stubborn apprentice!

He didn't let his shock show. He fluffed out his fur, tightening his jaw as he did so. He raised his muzzle and stared into the eyes of BlueStar, curling his lip. To her, he thought, he must look furious. Good.

Eyebrows lowered in fury, BlueStar's returned his glare. Her nostrils flared and for a moment she was silent before her jaw opened into one of a snarl. "Of course we care about the living cats!" Her voice rose, more powerful than the loudest apprentice. Her eyes glittered with a fierce intensity. "But we expect the living to return the favor! A prophecy is a prophecy, FatePaw! Do you want to know what happens when you refuse to listen to Starclan? I'll show you," any warmth she should've had was cold.

Knowing he had no choice, he followed her. Bile rose in his throat as the throaty screams of TigerStar drew nearer. She's taking me to TigerStar! He thought, terrified. Despite his anger, he couldn't suppress the feelings of horror he experienced as he heard the agony TigerStar was suffering.

"No, BlueStar," he growled, his note having a pleading tone to it. "What do you have to tell me? I already know he was 'destined to be evil!'" He remembered seeing an old gray cat hissing at little TigerStar, foam bubbling at his jaw. It had been too similar to the way SandFur had treated FallenPaw as a kit- but SandFur was a warrior, not a scatterbrained medicine cat!

"The cat who could have prevented it all," BlueStar answered, her ears flicking. "A cat who had a choice, like you. And he made the wrong choice, also like you," FatePaw opened his muzzle to protest, but BlueStar flicked her tail over his mouth to prevent him from hissing. Scowling, her gave her a dirty look, eyes chips of ice.

As they reached the flailing tom, BlueStar walked right up to the large tom, unflinching. TigerStar's yowled had been buried away by the sounds of silence, replaced by an eerie silence. Despite his crimes,

FatePaw felt a pang of pity for the large warrior- he would never wish that amount of suffering on his worst enemy.

Even StarClan? *A tiny voice inside of his head whispered.* Even StarClan... *FatePaw quickly told himself, shaking the thoughts away. BlueStar didn't seem to pity the tom, eyes cold. To his surprise, she bent down and touched her nose on his own, before vanishing.*

FatePaw swallowed- was he expected to do the same? They hadn't needed to do this last time. He hesitated, not wanting to be near the wounded warrior.

"No." He decided. Whatever BlueStar would want to show him, he didn't want to see it. It wouldn't change his mind. "No, I'll follow my own rules," his claws unsheathed. TigerStar was suffering- and FatePaw could assume that he had been, longer than the clan elders had lived. He had suffered for too long- so FatePaw would end his suffering.

He had been a terrible cat, but he had served his punishment. He didn't deserve to suffer forever. FatePaw lunged forward, slashing his claws across the throat of TigerStar. Would this even work? What if it added to the injury? His claws caught on the flesh of TigerStar, and he tore his claws with a fierce swipe.

Blood gurgled at TigerStars throat, his eyes widening. He let out a choking cry, his orange eyes lighting up with a new, alive pain. FatePaw shifted his paws- would this work? His face going blank, he wasn't sure. Had he just given TigerStar more pain?

He was wrong. The light started to fade from the gaze of TigerStar, until it was gone. His tabby fur started to fade, and soon enough, all that remained was a pool of blood. Recognition crossed his face as he picked up the scent of death. TigerStar was dead- he would never suffer again.

"What have you done?" The screech of BlueStar hit his ears. He whipped around to face her, expression hardening. BlueStar's eyes flared, mouth snapping shut after she spat.

"Simple. I ended a cat's suffering," he pursed his lips. "No cat deserves to suffer that long, do they?"

"You have defied Starclan," BlueStar's voice trembled with fury. Her lips drew back in a snarl, causing FatePaw to smolder with resentment. Fury springing to life, he leapt at her, tackling her over and pinning her down. He raked his claws across her muzzle, causing her to flinch. Eyes darkening, she raked her paws across his stomach.

Before claws could make contact, he leaped back, tail lashing. BlueStar advanced on him, rising her paw to bring her claws down on his head. Pain exploded in his head, and he snarled. He bunched his hindlegs and leapt on her back, digging his claws into her shoulders. He sneered,

"A medicine cat apprentice is doing better than the likes of Starclan!" His tail rose; would his clan be proud? Would FinShadow be proud? He was a great fighter, he-

"Oh, really?" BlueStar curled her lip wryly, "you fight like a fresh apprentice, kit!" She rolled over, flattening him beneath her. He lay, winded, as all of the air was pushed out of him. BlueStar grabbed his scruff and knocked him to the ground, further stunning him, before standing over him. Her eyes softened.

"I don't wish to fight you," her eyes glittered- was that a hint of regret? "But if you attack me, I must defend myself," weariness filled her tone. "Just listen to me, FatePaw. You must listen to the word of Starclan, or everything will go wrong-" she was cut off.

For a moment, shock filled her gaze. "No..." she gasped out before foam started to bubble from her lips. Pain filled her gaze, and she dropped to the floor, writhing in pain. She screeched, digging her claws into the ground below. FatePaw stood over her, rage nearly consuming him- yet, he was calm. BlueStar hadn't seen it coming.

When BlueStar had been speaking, FatePaw had glanced around for the death berries she had handed him. When he spotted it, he used his long tail to flick it over to him and grabbed it with his paw. Satisfaction filled his chest as he remembered forcing her into the poison.

"I've won," FatePaw narrowed his eyes. "I warned you. I warned all of Starclan I no longer follow them!" He quickly shoved away the horror rising deep in his throat, letting anger replace it. "You caused this; you

kept pressing on, even when I refused. You deserve to die,"

BlueStar lowered her gaze. She shivered; was she cold, or was she scared? "You've made your point," blood dripped from her mouth. "Starclan will leave you alone. You've won," her eyes flashed. "But you tread on your own path now, FatePaw..." Suddenly, she was limp. BlueStar was dead.

"No, no! She can't be dead!" A grief-stricken yowl caused FatePaw to awake. He shot to his paws, heart racing. Did some cat know of his murder- they couldn't! He had been alone with BlueStar, no cat had been there! Panic rushed through his fur, and he quickly ran out of his den to see what the wail was about.

ThistleOak was bent over the body of a brown she-cat, whose fur was soaked with blood. He must've been the cat who had wailed. Beside ThistleOak was FallenPaw's friend, DewPaw. His brown eyes were filled with grief, tears threatening to spill.

FatePaw forced his paws forward, his hackles rising. He let out a choked whisper as he recognized the cat- it was BriarDust. Her neck had been torn out, blood seeping into the dirt beneath her corpse. Her eyes were wide with shock as if she had been surprised moments before her death.

What had happened? Earlier that day BriarDust had left for a solo hunt, intent on feeding the clan, and pleasing Starclan. Now she was dead, no prey at her paws. Had she been attacked by a fox?

Whispers filled the clearing as cats started padding to the scent of blood, eyes wide. FallenPaw stared at the corpse for a moment, before dashing over to DewPaw. DewPaw just stared at FallenPaw, his gaze a mix of emotions. FallenPaw pressed his muzzle into the fur of DewPaw, providing comfort. DewPaw drew in a shuddering breath, wrapping his tail around FallenPaws.

FatePaw remained where he was, horror fixing him to the spot. BlueStar hadn't been the only cat to lose her life today- now BriarDust lay dead, aswell. *It wasn't BlueStar a cat wailed about: it was BriarDust.* Relief filled his pelt, despite the situation. No cat knew of what he had done- and he intended to keep it that way.

Why would any cat need to know what he had done? He knew what he had done had been right, but no cat would understand that. They were all tail-lickers to the stars, worshipping Starclan: as if the spirits hadn't caused generations of pain for all the warrior clans.

"Every cat, out of the way!" OwlStar raced across the clearing, blue fur springing out in shock. He must've heard the wails. Cats parted away as he raced through the clearing, dipping their heads. He halted at the paws of BriarDust, staring down at her. Horror filled his gaze, and he bent down to gaze at her neck, which still had blood slowly trickling out of it.

FatePaw had never seen the leader so terrified- not even when the fight had exploded out at the gathering, clan against clan, claw against claw. As OwlStar drew a paw across the throat of BriarDust, he whispered under his breath. For a moment, he remained frozen. Then, he raised his head, eyes alight with terror.

Several cats leaned forward, sensing that the leader had something to say. The whispers and wails had faded into a stony silence, as each warrior waited for their leader to speak. FatePaw glanced at FallenPaw, had he noticed? No, the tom hadn't moved a muscle. He still sat by DewPaw, embracing the tom in comfort. He didn't seem to notice the horrified whisper of OwlStar.

OwlStar swallowed and opened his mouth to speak. With great difficulty, he spoke. "BriarDust wasn't killed by a fox or a badger," he trailed off, struggling to go on. What had killed her, then?

"No, it can't be," one cat whispered.

"First GooseEye, now her!" Another hissed.

"OwlStar, are you suggesting that-?

OwlStar cut the cat off, raising his muzzle. He trembled for a moment, before going on. "Her throat was torn by the claws of a warrior. BriarDust was murdered. And it could be any of us..."

THE OFFICIAL DESIGNS OF... THE BROTHERS!

First, we have....

FallenPaw Designed and drawn by...

NightFree!

[image]

Now, the design of the other brother, FatePaw! A little spoiler for his full name, though!

Unlike FallenPaw, designed and created by...

ME!!!

[image]

New Cover!

ANNOUNCEMENT

Hello!

The lore of this story is no longer consindered canon, as I am rewriting this story to be more slower paced, have better lore and characters will be tweaked. Two chapters have been released for the rewrite, please go check it out!

I just want to thank you all for the support on this, despite its pacing issues, many flaws and delays. Thank you